Calamity

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Calamity

by lookupkate

Summary

Will Graham went ahead and fell in love with the devil, got himself framed for a murder he didn't commit, and is now being held at the BSHCI. We'll see how Hannibal copes with Will making new friends without him, and how those new friends can help Will with the thing stuck in his craw.

Will's hate doesn't lack any of the intimacy of his love, even while they're apart, and he's in a good mood. After all, there's nothing more satisfying than being pushed to revenge.

(Just remember the first rule of fight club: don't fall in love with him)

Notes

Now the bottom drops out. Now Will gives Hannibal up. Now reality sets in for the Chesapeake Ripper, and I'm so thrilled to have you all along. This is turning out to be a three parter: seduction, betrayal, seduction+bloodbath!

Betrayal is knocking at our doors (wow look! New tags!)...can you believe it took this long to get here? We're stepping into another world, away from easy comforts and slow simmering seduction and into violent revelations and impossible options. Things are gonna get messy in this new part of our story!

The Truth

Chapter Summary

Updating every week, unless I get busy or inspiration strikes!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jack met with Will two days later, when he was done with the most important medical issues and he could be sat up and told of his apparent crimes. He was scheduled to be admitted to the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane that afternoon. Jack had fought with his boss about whether it was really necessary, with only one murder being charged, but she had reminded him how completely mixed up in the Ripper the whole thing was. She wanted the Ripper, just like Jack did, so she was holding on like a terrier.

Jack handed Will a clipboard with some printed out sheets tucked in the clip and Will leaned in. His handcuffs clattered between the hold on the table and bit eagerly into his wrists as he took it, and he grit his teeth as he looked at the first page.

“We don’t do this for anyone,” Jack cautioned him. “We’ve never had a tie on a team vote before, Will. Do you understand? I’m showing you what we found, in the hopes that you can enlighten me as to how the hell you didn’t murder and consume a man.”

His voice sliced painfully into Will’s head, making him wince and shut his eyes for a second, the tension in the room rising with every shallow breath.

On the clipboard was a list of items found on his property including:

Eldon Stammets’ rifle

Eldon Stammets’ spent casings

Eldon Stammets’ handgun

Eldon Stammets’ cell phone

Eldon Stammets’ vehicle

Eldon Stammets’ liver

Next to each item were locations and other numbers he didn't understand. The only one without a location was the liver.

"Where did he put the liver?" he asked, needing to break the tension for himself for once, before he could go on to the second page.

"I'm sorry?" Jack asked, clearly feeling put out.

"Where did you find it?" Will asked, glaring at Jack over the table. *Keep the fuck up,* he thought.

"The freezer in your boathouse," Jack allowed, watching Will carefully now, like he suddenly understood that things were going in a different direction.

Will flipped to the second page and saw the end of the list:

Walter Price's trachea

Will Graham's cell phone

"Walter Price was the conductor that the Chesapeake Ripper killed," Jack said, misinterpreting his pause.

"Yeah, I know, I worked that case. You found my old phone?" Will asked, spinning through his memory of that night and wondering which of Hannibal's assurances had been lies. Had his phone been in his car? Had it been on Stammets and Hannibal *knew* it wouldn't have been in his car? It was maddening to not be able to pick out the lie, Hannibal being one of the only people who could effectively hide from him.

Stop. *Stop.*

"Tell me how we could find all this evidence all over your property and you didn't know?" Jack asked, pulling him back to the present.

"Obviously I'm being framed," Will said, shrugging his shoulders a bit and looking Jack right in the eye.

"You believe you're being framed," Jack said carefully, reminding Will that they were being recorded, if not also observed through the large mirrored wall over Jack's shoulder. "And do you know by whom?"

The way Jack asked made it sound like he was humoring a child and Will fought down the impulse to roll his eyes.

"Yes, and you won't believe me," he allowed, not breaking eye contact. "Till you do."

“Till I do?” Jack parroted.

“By then it might be too late,” Will promised, feeling a wash of control he hadn’t been expecting. “He might frame you too.”

“Can you tell me who’s framing you?” Jack asked, agitated.

Will smiled for a second, unable to hold in all the emotions he was feeling, then leaned in and made Jack another promise.

“I can tell you a story,” he said, watching the way Jack’s eyes searched his face. “That’s what I can do.”

“Then do,” Jack replied, his voice a little softer, a little more curious.

“Stammets was coming after me, we found that out through his first burner phone, and we concluded that he was coming to me to get to the Ripper,” Will said, going on when Jack nodded. “He made it to my property, but I don’t remember it. It comes back in shards in dreams, more symbolism than memory. What I do remember was waking up in Hannibal Lecter’s office with a raging headache, memory loss, and an injection sight covered in a perfect cotton ball.”

Will allowed for a pause, so that Jack could try to see it in his mind. When Jack nodded again he got back to it.

“Hannibal told me I had shown up on my own, in a fragile state. He took me home, to his home. He ran me a bath in his guest bedroom and he disappeared for the night.”

“Disappeared,” Jack echoed, less a question than a recognition that he wanted to find out what Will meant.

“He told me he was going to my house to care for my dogs, and I believe he did,” Will allowed. “I gave him my key, Jack. Not for the last time. He was gone all night. I tossed and turned until two and he was still out. It doesn’t take all night to feed a pack of dogs.”

“Okay,” Jack allowed.

“The Ripper then repurposed Stammets’ body into a message for *me.* A valentine, out of season. Months early, in fact. The next two killings happened, and I started to remember, I started to *see.* Hannibal could tell I was starting to see him, so he maneuvered me into a situation where I would kill.”

“North Carolina,” Jack said.

“Yes, the case in North Carolina. I think he believed if he could stir up my bloodlust that I wouldn’t turn him in. It just assured me that my instincts were right. The final piece happened at the opera on New Year’s Eve,” Will said, watching Jack perk up. “I was recording him, didn’t turn out. The point is, during intermission a woman asked about Hannibal’s famous annual dinner party, and he replied that he wasn’t having one this year. He said it was because work was a bit much, but that’s not why. Do you know why, Jack?”

Jack finally rolled his eyes, reaching his limit, but asked, “Why?”

“Because he had already cooked and presented the first of the Ripper’s three annual offerings,” Will said. “And he fed it to us, at dinner.”

“Will,” Jack said, tone warning.

“Alana Bloom, Jimmy Price and his husband, you and Bella, and me,” Will said. “We sat at his table, showed him pictures of his own crimes and argued over the romance involved in Stammets’ transformation. And...we ate him, most likely. The stew, Jack.”

Jack had turned a little green and Will sat back confidently in his seat. Not confident that he would be exonerated, but confident that by the time he was done Hannibal’s name wouldn’t be so clean. He hadn’t seen the future so clearly in his whole life.

“I was going to turn Hannibal in,” he explained with finality, “so he had to frame me for one of his crimes. He picked Stammets because he was my alibi, and probably because he killed him for me. It’s rude not to accept a gift.”

“This is a lot to take in,” Jack replied.

“I’m what happens when you lose the favor of the Ripper, Jack. I’ll be safe for now, wherever you put me. I don’t know about you,” Will said, looking up at the mirrored wall to make his point, eyebrows raised defiantly. “God be on your side. He sure as shit wasn't on mine.”

Hannibal was having trouble sleeping. The fact that Will had been taken into custody was everywhere, with gossip and news websites alike posting theories as to his involvement with the Ripper. A few sites seemed to think Will *was* the Ripper. People Hannibal knew were calling and texting with awkward bids at consolation. No one was quite sure what to say. His patients weren’t immune.

“I was up all night,” Franklyn Froideveaux said, nearly bouncing out of his seat to get closer to Hannibal. “I was so worried for you. And heartbreak! I can’t imagine the pain you’re in.”

“That’s very kind of you, Franklyn,” Hannibal said, his face purposefully blank in an attempt to discourage the behavior, “but this is your session, and I am simply here as your therapist. Let’s keep the focus on you.”

Franklyn’s smile broke for a second and Hannibal could see him digging in. It was the perfect catalyzing factor for someone like Franklyn; romantic disaster. He’d already shown signs of obsession towards Hannibal and the strong emotions he was currently feeling could easily be interpreted as connection, or importance. All the lights would be going off in Franklyn’s head and it would surely feel like divine will stepping in. There was no stopping it.

“I...am,” Franklyn started slowly, “feeling very emotional over the news of your tragedy. I know I’m spending too much time on TattleCrime, but it’s hard to avoid. I know you understand.”

“Your life has enough stressors on its own,” Hannibal said. “It’s not smart to pick up crumbs from other’s. You must first deal with what is in your lap. How is your support system? How did you fare over Christmas?”

“Good, I guess,” Franklyn replied. He didn’t like being redirected and it showed in his posture. “Tobias and I went to see the lights downtown and tried out a new wine bar. I’d mention it’s name, but the cheese selection was atrocious.”

“I’m glad to hear you weren’t alone. Holidays can be hard on all of us if we don’t have companionship,” Hannibal allowed.

Franklyn nodded once and burst into tears, face lighting up bright red as he reached for the kleenex box. Hannibal held it out, making him stretch a little bit for it because deep down it all felt a bit performative.

“I’m so sorry,” Franklyn said, drying his eyes. “I just pictured you sitting alone, now that your partner is gone.”

“This is not about me,” Hannibal reminded him.

“Is it so bad that I want to be your friend?” Franklin asked, shaking his fists in the air, face wet. “That I want to make sure I can support you how you support me?”

Hannibal imagined killing Franklyn, just to get him to be quiet. He would snap his little neck.

“I can only support you as a psychiatrist. Therapeutic intervention isn’t a two way street,” he replied. “Your instinct to attach yourself to someone going through difficult times is only your mind’s attempt to account for the outsized level of anxiety you feel. Don’t let it trick you, Franklyn.”

“If you say so, Doctor,” Franklyn said, somehow sounding both flirtatious and dismissive.

It took every bit of control not to roll his eyes, but the rest of the session went by with less tears. Franklyn spoke at length about his fantasy of befriending Michael Jackson before his death and Hannibal allowed it for a bit longer than he usually would. He finally tied it back to Franklyn’s neurosis in a way that gave the man pause. They spoke about his father then for the rest of the session and broke right on time to schedule their next appointment.

“I’ll see you then,” Franklyn said, “if I don’t see you earlier on the TattleCrime message board.”

Hannibal gave him a bland smile and waited until he was down the steps before sitting down with his iPad to scrub his presence from the site. Just another annoying development on an exhausting day. The worst part was that he wanted to call Will. He wanted to get home and eat and climb into bed and complain about his day over the phone like they had done so many times before. It was an itch he had to find a way to scratch, and he picked up his phone to go through his contacts to find a replacement. He dialed the number, and held his phone up to his ear.

“Good evening,” he said just as the call connected. “I was wondering if I could interest you in dinner tonight. I have salmon, and a new dessert dish I’ve been working on. And it would be good to see you.”

There was a pause on the other side and Hannibal held his breath.

“That’s a kind gesture,” Bedelia replied, her voice tight through the receiver, “but I don’t dine with patients, Hannibal.”

“You drink wine with me,” Hannibal tried, feeling a bit wrong-footed. “Think of it as me expanding the menu to include food. I could even bring it to you.”

There was another pause and Hannibal listened as Bedelia sighed and collected herself. “I like you, Hannibal, I really do. I just can’t be what you need right now. I know this must be a very hard time for you. I would encourage you to reach out to your support system.”

Hannibal was shocked into silence. He’d apparently found the edges of Bedelia’s boundaries again and hadn’t realized it. It would be worse to argue, so he cleared his throat and accepted his fate.

“In that case, I would like to schedule a session for later this week,” he said, shifting gears.

“Alright,” Bedelia replied. “Email me the time and date and I’ll set it up. Have a good night, Hannibal.”

Hannibal hung up his phone and let his disappointment gnaw at him, the office around him feeling vast in his sudden loneliness. The silence dragged on, only the click of the reliable grandfather clock a reminder that time wouldn’t halt its ever forward race just because he wanted it to.

That was the moment that he realized how unsteady his foundations had become. Before Will came along he had plans for the future and a group of acquaintances that let him believe he had everything he could want. Will had leaked into all aspects of his life, and now that he’d been ripped away it was obvious how many of Hannibal’s needs the man had been fulfilling. Without the structure of their weekday breakfasts and their evening phone calls Hannibal’s personal life was empty and weak, more a reflection of Will in his absence than a picture of Hannibal. He seriously wondered if he should even try to adjust to that.

Maybe it was best to feel Will’s absence as he felt it then; as the loss of a limb. That way, when Will came back, as he surely would, it would feel all the better. Reconnection could be blissful, if Hannibal played his cards right and was willing to brave this swift hell he’d brought on all of them. He closed his eyes and imagined Will at his elbow. He swore he could smell that terrible aftershave and a hint of sweat.

“Do you miss me?” he asked the apparition.

“He hates you,” the empty room whispered back. *“With all his heart.”*

Hannibal frowned and ducked his head, trying to be content in the knowledge that Will was surely thinking of him.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal, to an empty room: does Will still love me?

The empty room: he hates you

Hannibal: surely hate is just another form of love

Blood

Chapter Summary

Will gets his own pathetic cell in the bowels of the Baltimore State Hospital and Hannibal has a friend over for dinner.

Chapter Notes

Happy late Valentine's Day! This one just couldn't be rushed!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Being entered into the carceral system was humiliating and comforting at the same time. There was something in Will that would always cling to the surety of a strict schedule made by someone who was supposed to know better. It fed into the little voice in his head that assured him he was only one blink away from being a permanent fuckup. It was almost a relief to have his worst case scenario play out, or at least it would have been if it weren't so damned uncomfortable. The jumpsuit they assigned him had massive inner seams that irritated his skin, the shoes were tight in places and yet still too big, and the sole purpose of the interior of the building seemed to be to dissuade loitering.

Then there was the problem of Dr. Frederick Chilton. Chilton ran the BSHCI from some surely golden throne they kept in the staff offices, and had assigned himself as chief contact and new therapist to Will. A lot of psychiatric professionals, especially those involved with law enforcement, had been interested in Will over the years, but Chilton was interested in Will in the same way a child is interested in the butterfly they are pulling apart, the ant they're burning. How much of Will would be left after this interest played out was yet to be seen.

After Will was logged in the system and made aware of his upcoming therapeutic obligations he was assigned an orderly. M. Brown, going by the name tag, walked Will even further into the depths of the building, looking him over like a hungry dog the whole time.

"Watch your head," the orderly said, his lisp in no way taking away from his authority.

They took an elevator down and turned left. The door leading to the cells opened with the orderly's key card and they started down a line of sparsely filled cells. No one spit on them or called out to them, just a lot of slack jaws and dead eyes. Will felt his stomach drop, amazed he could feel worse.

They finally made it to Will's cell and the orderly led him in, looking him in the eye once they were both inside. "This is the first test. I'm going to take these handcuffs off and you're gonna let me lock you in here."

"Okay," Will laughed, still not used to being treated like he was dangerous.

The orderly removed his handcuffs and took a step back, making an appreciative noise in his throat before ducking out the doorway and locking the door. Once he was alone the space felt even smaller. The room was a tiny metal box with a stool, a toilet, and a thin bunk. Three of the four walls were solid, with bars on the one facing the long hallway. Will looked out through the bars as the orderly cleared his throat.

"Boss says you have to take your medicine soon. I'll be back in two hours," the man said. "I'll, uh, I'll bring you a strawberry milk."

"Okay," Will said, rubbing at his wrists. "What's your name?"

"Matthew," the orderly replied, smiling for just a second before he covered his mouth with his hand. Will knew that look from the first week of classes, Matthew was *smitten.*

"Thank you, Matthew," Will said as tamely as he could, sitting back on the bunk with a sigh.

A little flicker of something was lit at the way Matthew looked at him, some chemistry there he didn't want to delve into. He wouldn't encourage a crush, but he needed friends. It wasn't a time to be picky and he would eat when he could. For once he felt sure he could appreciate the things the universe was offering him without hesitation. He would have to build a whole life over, embrace brand new obligations and unforeseen rules changes. He knew this part well. He could start over one more time, no problem.

"Psst," came a voice to Will's left, bouncing off the hallway wall.

"Hello?" Will asked.

There was a rustling of fabric and Will leaned closer to listen.

"Got you something, it being your first day and all," the voice whispered. "I've been a very good boy, so I have office time each week. Go ahead, take it."

A folded piece of cheap printer paper stuck out of the prison cell next to him and Will reached his fingers through the gate to snag it. For a second he was sure a guard would appear or some sort of alarm would go off, but there was just silence. He pulled it into his cell and sat back down on the bunk to open it.

"It's your sweetheart. Too bad you don't have a locket to put it in," the voice whispered, growing louder until the next words were at regular volume, the ruse tossed aside. "He's a catch. A lot of animal magnetism there."

Will looked at the photo in his hands. Freddie Lounds had posted the original months ago, along with the update on the Minnesota Shrike case, and this looked to be cropped and saved from that very blog post. In it Hannibal was receiving medical attention in the back of an

ambulance, stripped nearly to the waist, exposing the open stab wound. The photo was printed in black and white, most of Hannibal's face and all of his chest and left pant leg were just blotches of black indicating blood. There was *so much blood* that it was unlikely it was all his, and he wore it like it had been won in battle. They must have just swabbed over the wound before the photo was taken, because it was a visible line, showing how wide the knife had been at its hilt. A kitchen knife instead of a pocket knife. A good sized knife would do Hannibal.

"We broke up," Will said. "But it's appreciated."

He folded the paper and stuck it under the bed against the frame.

"Sad to hear it," his neighbor intoned. "What did he do? Didn't treat you right?"

Christ, the entire place was *desperate* like a bunch of soap opera fanatics. Will chuckled and ran a hand over his face deciding only then to be completely honest.

"He's framing me for murder," he said, almost jovial. The shriek in response and the little laugh was enough to make him feel like the bell of the ball. And, god, did it feel good to say. The truth, running through him like a freeing blade. Odd feeling to have in such a terrible position.

Alana got a call from Hannibal halfway through the day asking if she wanted to come to dinner that night. She didn't feel like eating, even Hannibal's cooking, but she couldn't help wondering what had happened between him and Will. Her own intentions aside, she supposed it was the right thing to do to support Hannibal.

The whole ride to his house she was teary, the image of Will in that hospital bed coming to her out of nowhere over and over again. She didn't think Will was a killer, at least not the way he was being portrayed, but she was starting to see a side of him in retrospect that made her believe he would defend himself with some previously hidden cruelty.

Like a kicked dog, her mind supplied. *A whimper and then a flash of teeth.*

She reminded herself that they were barely to the point of charging him, and it could all still turn out to be some horrible mistake. It was enough to ground her and have her realize that Hannibal must be struggling tenfold. She felt a flicker of jealousy, the same feeling she'd had when she found out Hannibal and Will were dating. She still wasn't sure which one she was more jealous of, there was just an potency to their relationship that made her want to get closer.

Hannibal's house was lit up like never before, lights shining in every window as she pulled her car up to the curb. It felt almost garish compared to how strategically Hannibal usually lit the place and she wondered which shadows he was willing away. She shook off the thought and grabbed the bottle of wine she'd brought as an offering, then jogged up the front walkway in the gently falling snow.

“Alana,” Hannibal acknowledged, eyes sunken and face drawn as he pulled the door open. “I’m so pleased to see you.”

The last sounded like a lie, and she understood suddenly that the only person Hannibal really wanted to see was Will. A well of affection overtook her and she pulled Hannibal into her arms in the entryway, hand cupping the back of his head. He allowed the embrace and tucked his face into her neck, breathing out a small huff of breath.

“I’m so sorry,” Alana murmured. “I’m so sorry, Hannibal.”

He finally pulled back to close the front door, face blank even as he sniffled loudly. He took a moment to look Alana over before helping her out of her coat and ushering her into the kitchen. All the lights were on, reflecting off every shining surface. Two chairs had been dragged in and placed up at the counter, and dinner plates were set out and waiting.

“Tonight we have Juka,” Hannibal said, setting the wine Alana brought to the side and going back to the stove. “I chose chicken as the main ingredient, as duck or goose might be too rich for your liking. You’ll taste onion and bay leaf.”

Alana watched as Hannibal poured two bowls and added the final touches, then presented them with his usual panache.

“It’s red,” she said, anticipating beets.

“It’s a blood soup,” Hannibal replied. “A reminder of the precarious nature of life with a side of sautéed sorrel and black bread.”

Alana said nothing as he finished dishing everything out, waiting until Hannibal was sitting next to her to speak. “It smells amazing. And I’m honored to have you share comfort food with me. It’s from Lithuania?”

“Yes,” Hannibal agreed, pouring them both a glass of wine. “And you are correct about comfort. I’ll take it where I can get it these days.”

“To comfort,” Alana intoned, holding her glass aloft.

“Comfort,” Hannibal agreed.

They ate in silence for a while before Hannibal pulled an envelope out of his pocket and placed it on the counter between them. Alana’s name was printed on the front, so she took it and opened it. Inside was a brand new debit card with a sticky note attached to the back.

“For the dogs,” Hannibal explained. “The PIN number can be changed if you like.”

“Does Will know you’re doing this?” she asked, feeling strangely like a child caught in a disagreement between parents.

“Will is my family,” Hannibal said with a strangled intensity. “And by extension the dogs. Buster is on Apoquel for skin issues and I’m aware how much it costs to keep them all up to

date on heartworm medication. I've already been to the bank about Will's mortgage, this is just another loose thread. Use it at your own discretion until Will is free."

And there it was, Hannibal thought Will was innocent.

"Have you spoken with him?" Hannibal asked. "Since he was transferred?"

Alana shook her head. Did that mean Will still hadn't spoken to him?

"I don't know quite how to say this," she tried, summoning courage.

"You've always had a way with words. I doubt they will fail you now," Hannibal replied, going back to his dinner.

"I'm going to mess it up anyways," she found herself insisting.

"It's all a mess, though," Hannibal allowed, "isn't it? What's a bit more?"

No avoiding it, then. "Will didn't want to see you when he was in the hospital."

Hannibal looked up at her then and she felt a chill, the appraisal like fire on her skin as her stomach sank.

"Tell me what he said," Hannibal replied, face remaining eerily blank, eyes somehow shadowed in the oppressive lighting.

"I don't want to-" Alana tried.

"He will return to me," Hannibal interjected. "We will be whole again."

Alana's eyes fell to her soup, unable to withstand the scrutiny and pain writ large on Hannibal's face. "I don't pretend to understand your relationship."

"And you needn't," Hannibal warned.

"I just...I hope you're looking at this with clear eyes," she finished.

There was a long enough pause that Alana couldn't help but look up. Hannibal's jaw was working and there was still that little flash of anger under the surface. She wondered if he was angry at the situation, or at her for pointing it out. He took a long sip of his wine, eyes going distant.

"I believe I'm seeing things with more clarity now," he said after a moment, right hand fiddling with the cutlery in a way that was so unlike him. "I may have failed in my initial attempt at loving Will. Love came as a bit of a surprise to me, I admit."

The truth had Alana clutching his hand, trying to show him some form of support. She really never had seen Hannibal like this, and all the frightening intensity made sense in this revelation. The heartbreak, the blood soup, the dour appearance.

Hannibal cleared his throat to continue and she took her hand back. “You know me, I won’t allow failure a second time. The same pressure tearing us apart has strengthened my resolve, and I will stand sturdy and foursquare in my devotion. The gods will not move me.”

He was staring at her again, perhaps begging her to disagree, but Alana couldn’t look anywhere but her plate. He always had that way of speaking that made you feel foolish for ever thinking he would back down. Finally, she spoke, voice tentative, and the deal was set.

“I’ll ask around. I’ll find out how Will is for you.”

Chapter End Notes

Will: Hannibal and I broke up

Hannibal: obviously our love is only growing stronger... Why aren't you eating your blood soup?

Alternately

Hannibal, after successfully framing Will for murder: I MAY have failed in my initial attempt at loving Will. 👀👀👀👀👀👀👀👀👀👀👀👀👀

Beauty

Chapter Summary

> Will is visited in a dream and wakes to the reality of being interviewed by Frederick Chilton.

The dream crashed in around Will all at once, pulling him into its reality as if he was blinking his eyes awake. The woods were fragrant, eucalyptus and pine with an undercurrent of something metallic, and Will turned in circles, unsure for a moment which way to face. The confusion fell away as he recognized the pulsing lights that were coming from the back of an ambulance just a short ways away. Leaf litter crunched under his feet as he walked closer, ducking around a large elm, and peeked out into the clearing.

A tan house was set to the side of a circular gravel driveway, blood pooled on the concrete right outside the front door, and the ambulance hovered feet away, back doors open to reveal the injured party. Will took a few tentative steps, breaking from the tree line and trying to make sense of what he was seeing. Hannibal sat in the back of the ambulance, seemingly frozen in time as the orange lights above him circled lazily and a medic stood eerily still at his side. The rest of the world continued to move and it was like looking in through the flurry of snow into a snow globe.

After a few hesitant steps out of the trees, mostly to see if he had been noticed (if he *could* be noticed in this world), Will continued towards the vehicle. The bird call and wind in through the leaves was pleasant enough, but the fact that no sound came from the ambulance was unsettling. Hannibal didn't move, but his voice came from where he was sitting.

"Hello Will."

It was odd to be conversing with Hannibal's frozen frame, unsettling to have his voice come without movement from his lips.

"Is this a dream?" Will asked, finally standing right in front of Hannibal, close enough to see the caked blood drying in places, close enough to touch if he dared. Still, he felt that if he *did* reach out the moment would pop like a bubble and he'd be seen.

"Dreams allow a kind of honesty that can be avoided in the waking world," Hannibal's voice intoned. It wasn't an answer, but more of an acknowledgement. "What truths do you have for me?"

Will looked over Hannibal carefully, from his torn shirt and blood soaked trousers to his triumphant posture. He could feel his mouth set into a tight line as he tried to keep what he was feeling inside. It still slipped out, an oily thing.

“You’re beautiful.”

If Hannibal’s eyes could move in this place suspended in time, they surely would have. As it was, Will was still allowed to look over Hannibal’s body without being seen.

“Aren’t you afraid?” Hannibal’s voice asked, echoing slightly.

Will’s eyes ran over Hannibal’s chest, half exposed, drenched in blood, bubbles of the foamy stuff sticking up in his graying chest hair. He wanted to touch it, to feel it tacky between his fingers, to feel Hannibal’s skin, and the muscle below. He wanted to crawl into the heat of him.

“We’re not talking about beauty as reported in common usage. We’re talking about a vision that excites, a thing so captivating it calls to action. In that sense, I think the fear adds to your beauty,” he admitted, ears buzzing. “This is your best side. Still looking for mine.”

There was no answer, so Will shifted to look over Hannibal’s face. His hair was stuck down on one side with blood and from his left eyebrow down to his chin, half his face was cherry red. Cranberry. Will could taste sweet juice on his tongue. He remembered seeing the photo for the first time and being bowled over by how Hannibal’s nostrils flared and he seemed to sit in exaltation in the aftermath of battle, not in the least diminished by his injuries. Hannibal had looked much the same sitting between Jack and Alana in the BAU basement that fateful morning. His arousal had frightened him. When he’d first seen the bloody photo, days after it had been taken, he’d had a sense memory of pressing his fingers into Hannibal’s stab wound, shocked with the feeling of power over someone so terribly dangerous.

“This was when I knew,” Will said, coming to the realization at that very moment. “I knew what you were.”

“It caused you to step forward with renewed determination,” Hannibal’s voice noted, “to know what I am capable of. You wanted it.”

Will thought about how he’d called Hannibal that night, how he’d flirted so obviously. He’d stuck his fingers into that wound in anger, and come away wanting more. Seeing the danger hiding there *had* pushed him on.

“This is what you do,” he said, leaning in to wave a hand across Hannibal’s face to make sure he wouldn’t budge. “We burn ourselves, over and over again, desperate to get close enough. You are a corrupting force. I can feel every part of me changing, unraveling.”

“What new emerges?” Hannibal’s voice asked.

There was a faint click, click, *click* and the first movement from inside the ambulance came; Hannibal’s hand jumped from where it was resting primly on his knee to open, palm up. A flash of light and in his open palm was a kitchen knife. From the looks of his stab wound it was about the size of the culprit.

Will held his breath, preparing for another move. It didn’t come.

The knife gleamed, calling to him, and Will took it, held it up. The handle was tacky on one side from the blood covering Hannibal's hand, something that made its sudden appearance even more startling. Will looked over Hannibal's face one more time and bent to drag the blade to his throat, pulling it across taut skin, pushing in. The resistance was minimal, and Will blinked as blood flowed from the wound, spilling hot on his hand where it still held the knife, rushing down Hannibal's chest.

"Beautiful," Will murmured.

The second he stepped back the flowing blood started to *pour* and Hannibal's head bent back. He only had a moment to be reminded vaguely of a Pez dispenser before the blood turned black and the knife fell from his hand.

Black. *Black.*

The gushing blood turned into a mass of flies in the blink of an eye and Hannibal's body started to deflate like a balloon. Will hissed and swatted at the flies, smacking them from his neck where they were biting him and wincing at the oppressive buzzing as everything started to go black.

"Time to get up, Mr. Graham," Mathew, the orderly or nurse said. He was wearing all white again.

Will shot awake, the feeling of the flies on his neck coming with him out of the dream. He swatted at his neck and sat up, horrified to find he was sporting an obvious erection. He gave Mathew a pitiful smile and the man shrugged and looked amused.

"Nothin' I haven't seen," he said. "Chilton is expecting you in ten. This is your notice to relieve yourself and brush your teeth. I'll be back with your medicine in five."

"Strawberry milk?" Will asked, finally rising from the bunk.

"I'll see what I can do, Mr. Graham."

"Thank you, Mathew," Will said as he left.

Halfway through pissing Will was reminded he wasn't alone.

"I have to say that I don't know how you do it, but I'm smart enough to know when I'm in the presence of an expert. I wonder what it is about you that inspires such devotion from a certain kind of individual." Will's new neighbor said.

"Lost boys," Will answered, wondering what deficit of Mathew's was so attracted to him.

"We always knew you took in strays," his neighbor said.

"You know so much about me. What can I call you?" Will finally asked, figuring he was almost missing the natural window to do so.

“You can call me Abel,” the man replied.

“Your insights have a certain ring to them. You remind me of a psychiatrist I know,” Will replied, his words muffled by his toothbrush. “Please tell me you’re not trying to apply to my fanclub.”

Will heard Abel laugh and felt a little of the tension break.

“Against all odds,” Abel teased, “you aren’t my type. I’m simply interested like the rest of us in your cult-like following. It’s the most compelling story to come out of the blogosphere in the last two years, by far. There’s a little bit of something for everyone.”

“So you aren’t a fanatic?” Will replied, pushing back.

“More of an admirer, in the most platonic sense of the word,” Abel assured him good-naturedly.

Will would have responded, but the buzz of the opening gate told him Mathew was on his way back, and as much as the man might already have a soft spot for him, he also had a strict schedule to keep. Will thought that if someone could turn him monstrous, that was where it would break through. He willed his cock to stay out of it and turned to stick his hands through the grate for the handcuffs.

“Impeccable timing Mr. Graham,” Mathew said, clipping the handcuffs on him and tapping his hand twice.

Will stood back up and waited as Mathew opened the door and pulled in his tray. He zoned out as they went through this new routine, tipping his head back for the medicine and drinking the milk through a straw. He wondered if anyone else got to open their own milk, if this reminder of dependence was just for him.

Frederick was nearly ecstatic. He’d been on the phone most of the morning giving interviews to true crime enthusiasts and shady reporters, telling anyone and everyone how lucky he was to have such an interesting specimen coming into *his* prison. There was talk that Will Graham was guilty of more than just the one murder, that he had intimate knowledge of the Ripper. Just how intimate was still up for discussion, and Frederick really couldn’t imagine there was much more room in Will’s life for intimacy with Hannibal Lecter in his bed.

Hannibal Lecter was another story. He was masterful in his craft in a way that always shocked Frederick, pulling answers from people who didn’t know they were being questioned and openly mocking people who thought they were being complimented. It was unnerving to be under his scrutiny, so much so that he usually backed off. If he was going to get into Hannibal’s head without him knowing, it would have to be because he wasn’t in the room. Everything he ever wanted to know about Hannibal was packaged and cuffed and being led to his office that very minute, and once again he couldn’t believe his luck.

“Bethany?” he shouted. “Bethany?”

His new assistant came to the door, pen and paper in hand as always. Sometimes she looked at him like he was three inches tall. This was one of those times. Frederick adjusted his collar and smiled weakly at her.

“Would you be so kind as to get me a new bottle of distilled water for the espresso maker?” he asked, trying for southern charm and coming off cheap.

“Yes, Dr. Chilton,” she replied flatly, closing the door behind herself.

“Yes, Dr. Chilton,” Frederick mocked quietly.

The knock at the door startled him and he sat up as she came back in with the water and refilled the tank. She moved quickly and precisely, not spilling a drop or giving away any effort expended, and was back out the door just as Will was brought in.

Frederick himself had chosen the clear bite-guard mask Will was now wearing, and admired it on the man. He was small, if not petite, and the larger opaque masks would have swallowed him up like his jumpsuit did. Frederick reminded himself that size didn’t always match ferocity and nodded for Mathew to bring Will forward.

Shackled at the hands and feet, Will rattled as he was guided into the seat across from Frederick’s desk. The mask fogged with his hot breath and Frederick caught a look between Mathew and him. He was ninety-percent sure there was something there, and seventy-percent sure he could use it to his advantage.

“Thank you Mathew, you can go now,” he crooned, wanting to get on with it and have Will to himself.

The moment the door was closed he was out of his seat and fiddling with the espresso machine. “I’d offer you a cup, but the mask has to stay on. New policy after Abel Gideon bit off my last assistant’s right pointer finger. I take it you two have gotten acquainted.”

“We’re neighborly,” Will replied, his affect flat and unyielding.

“Good to hear,” Frederick replied, taking his drink back to his seat. "I expect this is a big change for you, and I want the transition to be as smooth as possible."

"Transition," Will mumbled.

"I can't imagine what it's like to go from one side of the table to the other," Frederick elaborated, "but I've never taken a life." Will glared at him and he pushed on. "What can you tell me about your mindset?"

"I'm being framed," Will replied. "So I'm focused on clearing my name. I'm not interested in therapy, let alone with you."

It took all his willpower to not roll his eyes. Everyone that passed through those doors was innocent in their own minds; it was the ultimate cliché.

"Why would someone frame you?" he asked.

"I got too close," Will said, eyes going blank for a moment.

"Too close?" he asked.

"I'm going to save that for my lawyer," Will replied. "And you aren't qualified to be poking around in my head, Frederick."

With the precedent set, Frederick started thinking about how he could do this the hard way. He had a few ideas.

Just the Two of Us

Chapter Summary

Hannibal takes on a new case and Will's new admirer checks up on what Freddie Lounds has to say.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Beverly Katz stood outside the motel entrance with her arms crossed, keeping herself warm and eyeing Hannibal carefully as he exited his car. They'd been called in along with a small crew to look at two fresh bodies just off the interstate. The bodies were mutilated and displayed in a way that didn't match any open cases, and though Beverly had thought at first sight that it could be a Ripper scene, there were no missing organs, no trophies taken.

"Looks like it's just the two of us," she said as Hannibal caught her eye.

"A new killer and no Jack Crawford in sight," Hannibal noted, making his way to her and following her down the length of the building to where caution tape was covering an open door. He held the tape up for her to duck under and followed her inside.

"Jack's with the big boss. They're working on something for court," she replied, pulling out a pair of gloves and passing the box to Hannibal. She watched him as he understood, and wondered how much of the trouble Will was in had to do with him. "He took Zeller and Price. Just us and the tech's today."

In the middle of the room, knelt and posed in prayer at the end of the bed, were a man and a woman. They were naked, suspended in place by what looked like fishing line anchored to the ceiling in an intricate display. Their ribs were made visible from behind, the fat, muscle and skin of their backs cut down the middle peeled up and held aloft to create bloody, wing-like flaps of skin. The bed they were facing was messy, slept in, and the bedside table was covered in vomit. One of the technicians worked to swab the surface for later analysis, picking up bits of medication and food.

"Mr. and Mrs. Anderson. They were staying in the room down the way, number ten," Beverly explained, watching Hannibal look over the victims and only turning away when he bent to smell the vomit.

"The killer created angels to watch over him in his sleep," Hannibal stated. "What madness must he have been meeting in his dreams?"

"Whatever it is he's meeting, he's nervous; the bed is soaked with sweat, and you saw the table. He paid cash, using the name John Doe. The attendant up front said he was normal, no

threats or lewd behavior. Brown hair, six feet, Caucasian," Beverly added.

The tech finally left the room and Hannibal turned to Beverly. She felt a pang of guilt as he looked her over, wondering if she'd been obviously staring. She was still trying to decide whether or not she blamed him for what was going on with Will. She was aware that she didn't have all the pieces of the puzzle, so she held off judgement.

"Is there something you need to tell me?" Hannibal asked, still eyeing her.

"I went to Jack about Will before you did," she replied, stunned that what she had been pushing down so hard just came to the surface. She was usually better at keeping her mouth shut, but she hadn't been able to focus on anything but Will since he was arrested. The guilt was back and it was *crushing*.

Hannibal looked to the door and then stepped closer, his intent to keep the conversation private obvious. "We were all worried for Will, I think. Is he as angry with you as he is with me?"

"He doesn't know I snitched," Beverly replied, the truth of it hollowing her out. She blinked up at Hannibal and gave a weak shrug.

"Your secret is safe with me," he assured her. "I'm perfectly fine keeping all of the blame. His anger will fade with time."

"I don't think Will is a killer," Beverly added, not sure she'd made that clear. "I just think his judgment has been off, and in this line of work that can be deadly. He shouldn't have been consulting. It wasn't safe for any of us."

"He insisted," Hannibal replied. "He'd become obsessed. No one could have stopped him from working the Ripper cases."

"I could have," she said, throat tightening. "If I had known."

Hannibal regarded her carefully. "Will has gone into the dark. I don't think any of us knew just how far he would go, or what he would find there. A drowning man will often fight you as you attempt to save him. He will pull you down in his bid for air. You must always remember, this isn't cruelty, it's desperation."

A male technician ducked under the caution tape and Beverly looked back at the bodies, feeling hot under Hannibal's gaze. If he was telling the truth he surely felt as distraught as she did. If he was lying, though, he sure knew the right things to say.

The break room at the State Hospital was almost always empty, the nurses and orderlies preferring the defunct back lobby now that the main hallway to it had been rerouted and they could smoke their cigarettes in peace. Mathew flicked the light on and listening to the crack and pop of the fluorescent bulb. With no one around he unbuttoned his white jumpsuit to the waist and tied the sleeves in a knot, revealing a perfectly white undershirt. The small room smelled of mildew lately and the new mark on the ceiling tiles was definitely to blame and

getting bigger by the day. He made a mental note to tell the floor manager to take a look at it and grabbed his lunch bag from the small fridge.

He found a folding chair and settled into the quiet space to eat his ham sandwich and chips. There was a lot to think about. It was invigorating to feel how close to *change* things were. He could smell it in the air, could feel the crackle of it when he got close to Will. Will *had* to be the catalyst and Mathew found himself thinking of him obsessively, living for the brief moments they were together.

He pulled out his phone and went to the TattleCrime blog. Freddie Lounds had been promising a full exposé on Will Graham since he was taken into custody, and sure enough a new article covered the home page. Across the top was a red banner with white words:

'We need to talk about Will Graham.'

He took a bite of his sandwich and scrolled down. Freddie was a mainstay in the true crime world and he'd been following her for years. That meant he knew the signs when she first started talking about Will. She was on him like white on rice and Mathew took that as a sign to pay attention. In the last few months he'd learned everything he needed to know about Will from her and Chilton, and now that he was here, well, *wow.* He opened his drink and read the first paragraph of the article.

'Dear readers,'

He clutched his chest and giggled, nodding to himself before continuing.

'If you've been following TattleCrime for the last few months you may have begun asking yourself a certain question. Should we, as citizens, allow the FBI to continue their incestuous relationship with criminal minds, seeing what working with Will Graham opened them up to? I believe we should call for an immediate intervention and a plan of action from the heads of the FBI, and I think by the end of this article you will too.

'When we first met Will Graham he was profiling killers, using his imagination to connect with the killer and explain their fantasies. The local psychiatric community considered him a rare tool in the apprehension of serial murderers. That, of course, was before the Chesapeake Ripper and Baltimore's favorite benefactor, Hannibal Lecter, both took an interest in him.'

He tossed his phone to the ground, cursing under his breath. *Fucker. Cunt. Son of a bitch,* Hannibal Lecter made him furious! He'd framed Will for murder when he had the luxury of Will's affection. Jealousy and anger swirled in the pit of his stomach and there was a kind of desperation rising in him that said he needed to *eviscerate Hannibal,* needed to *bleed him dry!*

He wanted to *avenge* Will, felt an instinct to prove his devotion in a way he hadn't ever really considered before. The opportunity to cause pain on Will's behalf had him feeling dizzy and greedy, and a little bit drunk. Will would be the first person to really understand what he was, what he had to offer. Hannibal needed a reckoning, and having Will up close and personal only made that so much clearer.

Beyond Hannibal, there was the prospect of angering the Ripper. He supposed that came with it's benefits too. He had always been fine being a small fish, didn't mind his kills being overshadowed by the more well-known psychopaths in his field, but poaching one of their own? That was something he wouldn't forgive the Ripper for, and if he had a chance to show him up by courting Will's favor, all the better. He would keep Will in the dark for now, but when the time came he would show his loyalty.

His breathing back to normal, Matthew bent and picked his phone back up, brushing off the screen and looking for cracks. He decided it was probably best to wait until he was home to read the rest of the article; he didn't need any marks for behavior on his file.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal, framing Will: this can't go wrong

Mathew, in the shadows watching: think again, asshole

Eager

Chapter Summary

Will gets a letter...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It took a week and the arrival of a letter for Abel to get back into gossip again. It had been one of the longest weeks of Will's life, including the first week at the academy and the time he'd had food poisoning on vacation. Between meeting with Jack, who was starting to believe him, Kade Purnell, an investigator for the Office of The Inspector General, who very much didn't believe him, and his lawyer, who didn't seem to care either way, he was exhausted. That must have been why he didn't reject the letter outright.

Mathew had given him a knowing look when he handed the single letter over, holding it for a second too long. Jealousy was an interesting color on the man, and Will hoped it wouldn't come with any repercussions.

"Who's it from?" Abel asked, eager to interject his presence as always.

"The enemy," Will said, turning the open envelope over in his hands to inspect the back before he could handle looking at Hannibal's name in that perfect script.

"Not fond of staying under the radar, is he?" Abel replied.

Will huffed a laugh, thinking back on all the times Hannibal had finessed the spotlight, had directed perfectly. He wanted to knock his teeth in. "No. He's...theatrical if nothing else."

"Are you gonna read it?" Abel asked.

"I'm not sure," he replied. "Should probably hand it over to my lawyer."

"You know," Abel said. "Chilton himself reads through everything. It would be a shame to let him the only one in the know. Could be interesting stuff in there."

Will leaned against the wall and picked at a scab on his arm. He wanted to open it and be rid of it in equal measures, and it had him at a standstill. "I don't want to be pulled back into his orbit."

"Could he manage that? With just a letter?" Abel mused. "I knew he was charming, but that's downright otherworldly."

Will thought about Hannibal's pull on him, thought of the way he obliterated his victims, making their last waking moments a reflection of his monstrosity. It was all or nothing with a man like Hannibal, and all came with a body count.

"I was going to ask you why you didn't just kill him, but the more I get to know you, the more I think you aren't a killer," Abel admitted.

"I'm not," Will replied, the instinct to deny the possibility overriding his own memory for a moment. "I mean, I killed someone on the job."

The memory of that day was so tangled with Hannibal that the focus was on Hannibal's words to the boy, on the way that tender command to come to him had felt so familiar, instead of on the life he took. It didn't feel like an act of god in the way a murder should, but more like an intervention. She had made the choice to steal those boys and destroy them, and he was just minimizing the fallout.

"We heard all about the case in here. You put her down like a rabid dog," Abel said, peeking into his mind a bit.

"She was on a path of destruction, I was just in the right place at the right time," Will replied. The letter in his hand seemed to burn hot. Hannibal had put him there, so much of his trajectory was Hannibal's doing.

"Did you identify more with the families or with those lost boys?" Abel probed.

"I identify with the boy in the fireplace," Will admitted without thinking.

"Are you suicidal, Mr. Graham?" Abel asked, suddenly much too professional.

"Not anymore," Will replied, running his thumb over the flap of the envelope. "I've risen from the ashes."

"Nietzsche spoke of doing just that," Abel remarked, voice back to a conversational tone. "Something about the necessity of burning yourself in your own flame. Was it your flame that burned you, or his?"

Will rolled his eyes and opened the letter, pulling out a thick folded piece of paper. "You're sounding like a shrink again, Gideon."

Abel huffed out a laugh and quieted down, backing off so Will could read the letter. It felt like the sudden quiet had been what allowed the scent of Hannibal's cologne to unfurl from the paper, and Will found his throat closing up at the weight of longing that accompanied the smell. He was brought back to his home kitchen, to Hannibal wearing his apron. It felt like the whole of his existence, each moment he'd lived, was pressing down on him and making it impossible to breathe.

It had been months since he'd first thought of removing Hannibal from his mind with the blade of a knife, cutting away the part of himself that didn't burn his business card. Was that

his humanity, his eagerness to please, or was it something darker that balked at the image in the mirror?

Are you suicidal, Mr. Graham? his mind provided. He shook his head, and began to read.

Dear Will,

I am reaching out to you in this form because you have refused other forms of contact. I had hoped to see you before you left the hospital, If only to let you know that I'm seeing to your finances and you have nothing to worry about at home, but you cut off visitation. I understand how difficult this must be for you, coming to terms with the plans you've set into motion and dealing with the consequences alone. I only wish for you to know the endeavor need not be a lonely one.

As for your anger towards me, I will remind you that you once promised to eat my heart in the marketplace. Am I truly selfish for taking that threat seriously, knowing how easily you turn to punishment and how happily you dole it out?

As I've said before, I will give you anything you want, but you must first say the word. Will you ask for my help, or will you remain bitter about Cupid's arrow, and unwilling to admit love's arrival is always barbed? I feel the pain now, as I'm sure you do. I ache for you.

Think of me,

Hannibal Lecter

Will looked up from the page, letting his eyes fall closed. The sound of the gate down the hall opening reminded him it was time for his medication. A shock had set around him at having so many memories drudged up, and he felt himself fold the letter and tuck it back into the envelope from a distance.

"You're needed in the med bay," Mathew said, the sound of his keys on his belt almost a comfort. "Approach the bars, Mr. Graham."

Will went through the steps and tried not to look through the bars at Abel as they passed. He didn't want to see the eagerness in his face; didn't want to think about how he would have to portray the letter. It was too painful to feel like gossip. He let Mathew lead him down the corridor and into the elevator, eyes fixed on the floor. Once the elevator doors closed Mathew stepped closer.

"What does he want from you?" he asked.

They hadn't talked much, but Will knew his business would have made it his way sooner than later. The fact that he was asking about Hannibal felt less like a red flag and more like a new reality. Everyone he knew wanted to talk about little else.

“He wants me to say uncle,” he replied.

“He has some nerve,” Mathew said under his breath, pressing a few extra buttons on the elevator panel to give them some time.

“He’s all nerve,” Will agreed.

“You deserve someone in your corner,” Mathew said, sounding a bit too involved for that small space.

“You looking to put in an application?” Will asked, voice only a little bitter.

“I believe I already have,” Mathew replied, just as the doors opened. “Watch your step, Mr. Graham.”

The command had something funny turning over in Will’s stomach and he cleared his throat. They walked down the long hall to the medical center and Mathew checked him in with the main nurse, then took him into a back room and sat him down. The fluorescent lights and the chemical smell brought Will back to the hospital in his mind, and he was undone momentarily.

“I’ll be taking blood today,” Mathew finally explained, his gentle voice a balm. “Need to make sure the infection isn’t coming back.”

Will nodded and sat back, watching as Mathew opened the drawers and collected everything he needed for a draw. It was a relief to be out of the cell, and he found himself wanting to bond more with the man who allowed it. “You’re a phlebotomist?”

“I’m a little of everything,” Mathew replied.

“I can admire that in a man,” Will answered, aware of how absurd he sounded.

Mathew sat across from Will and caught his eye briefly before swabbing his skin with a cold cotton ball and tightening a length of rubber around his upper arm like a tourniquet. It was the first time Will had been touched outside of getting handcuffs placed on him in over a week and he let his eyelids fall closed as Mathew felt for a vein.

“Make a fist. Little prick now,” Mathew announced, his voice soft in a way that hurt more than the needle. “Will you say uncle?”

Will was stunned at the question. He wanted to say no, to demand that he wouldn’t bow to Hannibal’s will no matter what, but he found the words dying on his tongue. He opened his eyes and focused on Mathew’s lips, trying to ferret out the truth.

“He doesn’t deserve you,” Mathew said after a moment.

Will swallowed and watched his blood run into the plastic tube. Mathew replaced the full vial with an empty one and leaned in a bit to catch Will’s eye. When he did he smiled and Will shrugged and smiled back.

“I’ve been following your case from the beginning, Mr. Graham,” Mathew explained gently, continuing to smile. “I know you’re not a killer.”

“Everyone keeps saying that,” Will huffed.

“I know what you can see, what you do. What do you see in me?” Mathew added.

Will looked up at him, then down at his hands. Careful hands. He could feel the coiled strength rolling off of Mathew and could see the glint in his eye. He didn’t want to say what he saw there, the flash that made the hair on the back of his neck stand up.

“I see eagerness,” he whispered. “Power.”

Mathew’s smile turned into a grin and he finished the blood draw, placing a bandaid over the drop of blood in the crook of Will’s arm. “Okay, Mr. Graham. Let’s get you back to your cell.”

Will nodded, and mulled over what that eagerness could mean.

Chapter End Notes

I want to knock his teeth out too 👀

Also, is it getting hot in here? 🔥😅💥

Lonely

Chapter Summary

Hannibal reflects on some things and has a strained conversation with Jack Crawford.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Loneliness wasn't a foreign concept to Hannibal Lecter. As the only surviving member of his nuclear family, loneliness was a constant reminder of what he'd lost. In his childhood, the only times he managed to get close to his classmates he found them to be lackluster in comparison to his memories. He didn't want just anyone for company after all, he wanted his father, his mother, his sister, especially his sister.

Authority figures hit closer to the mark. They usually came with a full vocabulary and a home of some sort where he could spend time away from the orphanage. While other students were visiting family, Hannibal learned the piano from a sad history teacher that had shag rug in the bathroom and a claw foot tub, he learned to cook in a cramped kitchen with a view of an herb garden under the supervision of his French teacher, he learned the art of argument and how to shave from an art history teacher at the local college. If all else failed he could talk philosophy with the men playing chess in the park. His easy extroversion made him the perfect student of life.

There were so many things he wanted to do, so many skills to learn and perfect, and the list just seemed to keep growing. With the world opening up to him and possibilities shining from every direction it was hard to feel the loneliness. It faded into the background until the crushing nighttime hours, until that dark room filled with beds and the sounds of other boys sleeping.

After his uncle adopted him he found his interest in more time-intensive subjects to be a good salve for the pull of the past, and applied himself to any physical task he could manage in his downtime. Over one summer, when he was freshly sixteen, he learned how to cane furniture, how to pilot a boat, how to deliver a calf, and how to work leather, all while taking classes in the evenings. His family money had been returned after sitting in a trust for years, and he took every opportunity to spend it on new experiences.

That was when his love of music really blossomed. He volunteered as an usher at the local opera house for the first time that fall, and found himself weeping in the aisles. The opera spoke to his deep loneliness and the relief was profound. He promised himself that no matter where in the world he ended up, there would be opera.

Busy. Busy was what kept Hannibal Lecter going. It wasn't like the loneliness went away, per se, but he was able to achieve the things he wanted out of life without it stopping him. Achievement was surely a form of happiness.

It worked perfectly for years, his network of acquaintances and hobbies keeping him content. Even the killing was under control. He had a schedule and a Rolodex full of the worst people in town. He had a job that allowed him, no, asked him to climb into the minds of those more malleable than himself. The world was his oyster. There wasn't really anything he would have wanted to improve upon.

Enter, Will Graham.

Hannibal had watched grainy video of Will for hours before they ever met. Not that there were hours of footage, but that he recycled them over and over. A few speeches, a few conferences, and the same things stood out. The undercurrent of irritation and anxiety was one; Hannibal could almost taste it. *Square peg in a round hole.* He looked like he was a house painter, pulled off the street to model for Macy's, unsure how to move in the classic blazer and tie.

The rush Hannibal got when watching the same fumble for notecards, the same clumsy adjustment of a microphone, was nearly shameful. As it was, he leaned into it the moment he met Will. Will's stiff posture, irritated voice and flitting eyes? Hannibal swore he'd be full for days. He drank it all down, the final piece coming when he handed his card to Will and the man started to sweat. It was like a drug.

The second he got home that night he started baking with Will in mind. It was a soft edged sort of plan, and he wasn't even sure if he was more interested in the opportunity to feed Will, or the possibility that he would find out and flush beautifully for him again. There was some part of knowing that he would find the offerings and take them into his body that was necessary to Hannibal. It wasn't like taking joy from feeding others was a mystery to him, but this was slightly different. He swore he *needed* to be a part of Will's life.

When Will's irritation and apprehension had turned to cruelty and anger upon their second meeting it was welcomed. Will wasn't venting, he was taking place in a power play. Under it all was the smell of his sweat, his fever, and fresh fear. He wanted to embarrass Hannibal, wanted to scratch and bite at him to show he wasn't prey, and it was all so visible. He was refreshingly open about his contempt.

It was a great seduction, the way Will tore him down.

Hannibal still may have been able to turn away then, and he would have had he known that making Will happy would feel better. As much as he'd been obsessing a bit over Will, he had no intention in changing his life. He wanted to get all the entertainment he could out of the twitchy little man and burn out, like usual. He wanted a good taste, and then freedom. Caring about someone else's happiness would just get in the way of that.

Love, of course, didn't ask to be let in. It just walked through the doors with all its baggage and changed the flavor of everything. Hannibal couldn't spend an hour with anyone that didn't end in him bringing up Will's name, and found every anecdote leading back to him. He

saw it happening from a distance with a bit of a fright and dull agitation. The warmth blooming in his chest at the thought of Will felt painfully cliché, and he wasn't sure he'd survive the indignity of it.

If loving Will was pain, he wasn't sure how to explain the fevered anxiety of losing him. He honestly thought it would be easier than it was. He tried to picture it like removing necrotic tissue, and assumed that after the first few days he would start to heal, start to turn back into a previous version of himself. The idea that he'd be writing a letter to his incarcerated lover, instead of detaching was laughable to him at the time.

"You're distant today," Jack Crawford said, pulling him from his thoughts, his memories.

Hannibal blinked and took a deep breath, trying to figure out how much of the truth he could let slip out. Jack's office felt small, cramped. "I'm distraught," he allowed.

"I'd be worried if you weren't," Jack replied, wine glass at his lips.

Hannibal looked back down into his own and sighed, twirled it so that the liquid rose around the lip, crested and fell. "Will won't speak to me, but I'm sure you know that. I had an embarrassing phone call with the intake nurse at Chilton's hospital just this morning."

"I should have told you visitation isn't possible for the first month," Jack replied.

"Yes," Hannibal said, none too kindly, "you should have."

Jack sighed and ran a hand over his face. "I'm sorry. I've been busy trying to make sure Will's got some sort of defense. I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with Kade Purnell about getting Will his own personal lawyer. The company one wants him to take a plea."

Hannibal wasn't sure how he had missed it before, but a truth was suddenly coming clear. "You think he's innocent," Hannibal said, his head spinning.

Jack looked at the door over Hannibal's shoulder before leaning in. There was really no reason to, as they were alone, but Hannibal mirrored the movement.

"He's fucked, let me lay that down first," Jack explained. "The evidence against him is extensive. If he didn't do it, if he's being set up, it's someone who knows him, knows his patterns. It's someone who's familiar with his dogs enough to get into his house."

Hannibal watched as Jack waited for his response. He took a long swig of his wine and let his eyes fall, only asking the next question because he knew Jack couldn't answer it. "Who do you suspect?"

Jack sat back in his chair and Hannibal had the distinct impression that he'd failed in his response. Jack had wanted something else from him.

"You know him best, Hannibal. How could they get close to him without you noticing?" Jack asked.

Hannibal's nose scrunched up and he fought to keep his emotions under control. "You're acting like I've been cuckolded."

"Haven't you?" Jack shot back. "Did the Ripper make it into Will's bed when you weren't looking? Cause he sure as hell made it into his head."

Hannibal stood, placing his empty wine glass on the desk between them, and gathered his jacket. "If that's all, I'll be seeing myself out."

"I'm sorry," Jack said, all the warmth gone from his voice. "I had to ask."

Hannibal frowned at him, alarm bells going off in his head. "Whatever you think you know, Jack, I will remind you that I have been nothing but loyal."

Jack might have replied, but Hannibal's ears were buzzing so much as he left the office that it didn't register. If Jack suspected him then he would tell others, and if enough of them turned, well, anything could happen. He needed to get rid of everything in his basement, needed to go cold for at least the next few months. He had another card up his sleeve, but he didn't want to use it. It could only be used once, and he needed to wait until he really had no other choice.

He imagined Will telling Jack the truth, could see it spilling out between them in that interrogation room. How easy had it been to whisper Hannibal's name, to turn his back on the secrets they were keeping for each other? Betrayal burned anew in his gut as he made it out of the main building and to his car.

The second he was inside he broke, letting out a pained growl and bashing his right fist against the center console over and over. He hit it hard enough for his knuckles to sting and the skin there to pull and split, and kept going, only able to stop when the adrenalin gave out. In the end, he was left feeling only one thing; lonely.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal, after framing Will for murder: caring about people is so hard? Am I the victim???

Juicy

Chapter Summary

Will's first alliance is sealed, and Chilton can't wait to tell Hannibal the bad news.

Chapter Notes

Matthew/Will chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will was expecting Matthew to come get him for an appointment with Chilton at two, so he was in his own mind when Matthew came to the cell at one-thirty. He heard the sound of the gate lock disengaging and the keys on his belt distantly, but his focus was still on reconstructing the crime scene he'd been accused of causing. Reconstruction had become a bit like meditation in the past few weeks, as it was the only time he could experience the outside. He was in the clearing on his hands and knees, could smell the damp leaves and rotting wood and feel the dew soaking through his pant legs, freezing his skin-

"You alright, Mr. Graham?" Matthew said, startling him no matter how gentle the tone.

"He's dissociative," Abel chirped from his cell. "Our boy has been out at sea."

Will felt himself shiver as he came back to full consciousness, looking over to where Matthew stood with his hands behind his back and a soft smile lighting his face. Will blinked a few times and stood, his knees protesting painfully.

"Is it two already?" he asked, wetting his lips as he approached the bars.

Matthew smiled wider and raised his eyebrows, obviously fighting with amusement. "Chilton wants another blood screening. We're stopping in the med bay for a bit first. Hands, Mr. Graham."

Will nodded even though he didn't understand how they could want so damn much of his blood, and turned to push his hands back through the opening. He wasn't looking forward to his appointment with Chilton and the change in plans made it feel prematurely imminent, but the thought of being in a quiet room under Matthew's attention was incentive enough to snap to it. Will would never make him wait.

The cuffs Matthew put on him were always warmer than the ones added for transport, and it occurred to Will that he was soaking up the little bread crumbs of comfort without thanking the man. Their time together was often unbearably charged, so he'd kept his mouth shut about it. He didn't want to unbalance whatever unsaid agreement they were working under, but that felt like cowardice in retrospect. His father taught him to always be grateful, and he tried to remember to find a quiet moment to thank him.

They were finally alone when the elevator doors closed so Will cleared his throat, rough from all the time unused. "I appreciate what you do for me, Matthew," he began. It made the man grin wildly so he went on. "Just in case you thought I didn't notice all the little kindnesses."

"Mr. Graham," Matthew replied playfully, "I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

The elevator door opened and Will huffed a laugh and allowed himself to be led down the hall to the nurse's station. The nurse on duty that afternoon was an older blond man with wire rim glasses. He took in a deep breath in recognition as they approached.

"Bloodwork," he said, holding out a clipboard with a set of keys on it. "Room three."

Matthew took the clipboard and thanked the man, then directed Will to the same room they always used. The keys were easy in his hand and the door opened smoothly. Will walked in and sat on the edge of the padded medical bed as usual, hands clasped in his lap. Matthew locked the door and knelt to open the cabinet under the sink, pulling out two white paper bags. The smell and the grease stains said hamburger and fries, and Will made an odd sound of surprise in his throat as one of the bags was set in his hands. *Fucking God of God's, American fast food.*

"Stopped at the burger place down the street. Thought you might need something a bit more substantial to get you through the two hours Chilton has you booked for today," Matthew explained, sitting on the wheeled stool and pulling out his own burger. "Can't have your stomach growling halfway through."

Will was feeling strangely emotional so he stuffed fries in his mouth and just nodded and hummed in response. He was hungry all the time with the food the prison provided, and he almost never had anything so calorie and fat rich besides the kid-sized strawberry milk. His hunger felt like a wild thing and he ate a bit faster than he wanted to. Matthew noticed his struggle and bent down to pull out an almost forgotten drink.

"How can I pay you back for this?" Will asked after Matthew passed him the soda and he could breathe again. "I feel-"

Matthew laughed and stared at Will with those glittering eyes, and Will thought feverishly about how his mouth would taste. He was still unsure if it was anything but pavlovian at that point, it could be the simple matter of latching onto the first person who was decent to him. He had almost forgotten about decent.

"I'll tell you what you can do," Matthew assured him, smiling warmly. "You're gonna get out of here, and when you do-"

Will watched his lips, transfixed, stupidly aroused.

“You and I can get together, and take *him* out,” Matthew finished, taking a huge bite of his burger and raising his eyebrows.

The way he’d said the word ‘him’ let Will know he was talking about Hannibal. Will didn’t know what to say, was so shocked by the dissonance between what he thought was going to be said and what was. All he knew was that somehow he was getting what he wanted “Yes,” he agreed, eyes flitting back to the floor.

“Was that a yes?” Matthew asked, hand over his heart.

Will laughed and rolled his eyes. “Consider it a date."

Matthew set his food down and rolled closer on the funny little stool, still sipping on his drink. He pressed up against Will, between his knees. Will froze, eyes roaming over Matthew’s face and finding nothing but pure want. It flowed through him, every inch of his body tingling in recognition. He glanced at the door, remembering it was locked, and then looked back to Matthew where he sat with an open-mouthed smile.

“How much time do we have?” Will asked, licking the end of the salt off his fingers.

“Ten minutes, Mr. Graham,” Matthew replied, setting his drink on the floor and resting his hands on Will's bony knees.

“Long enough to kiss me at least,” Will said, amused at his own boldness.

Matthew surged forward, brought their lips together, and it was the easiest thing in the world to give up control. Will kept his moans and whimpers soft as Matthew's hot tongue pressed into his mouth and they kissed languidly for long minutes. Will was lost in it, felt himself responding with growing hunger. He gripped the front of Matthew's shirt with his shackled hands to keep him close as they finally broke apart for air. Matthew kissed across his cheek to his ear, breathing hot against him, burying his nose in Will's curls.

"Jesus," Will sighed.

"My thoughts exactly," Matthew replied.

Will let out a surprised laugh and bent to kiss down Matthew's neck. He tasted his skin and took long stuttering breaths as he tried to get his fill. His arousal felt primal in that moment, washing over him and loosening every muscle in supplication.

"You smell good," he whispered, floating with his eyes closed and his mouth to Matthew's neck.

"That's the three-in-one shampoo," Matthew said, pressing a warm kiss to the crown of his head.

Will couldn't help the giggles he let out, delirious at feeling this connection growing between them.

"I'd love to spend the afternoon seeing to your every need," Matthew admitted, sitting back a bit, "but you have places to be, and believe it or not, I'm supposed to be on the clock."

Will groaned and ran his hands over his face. The last thing he wanted was to be pulled away to see Chilton. Matthew giggled and laid one more kiss on Will's cheek, then went about cleaning up their secret lunch.

“Bethany!” Frederick's voice rang out, full of anticipation. He’d said her name twice now, and he couldn’t hear her approaching. There wasn’t time, he needed her now!

The door opened and she sauntered in, the same neutral look on her face. “Yes, Dr. Chilton?”

“You need to move with more urgency, my dear,” Frederick chided, his fist shaking in the air. “Mr. Graham is on his way.”

“Yes, Dr. Chilton,” she replied flatly.

Frederick rolled his eyes and flapped his hands at her. “That’s beside the point. I need your honest opinion. The new salmon drapes...they aren’t too salmon, are they?”

And yes, he knew his obsession with the décor of the room dragged on the staff, but that didn’t make him any less likely to ask for reassurances. It was like an itch he had to scratch.

“I mean, he’s a fisherman, a fishing, uh, person,” he stumbled. “I don’t want him walking in here thinking, ‘oh they changed the curtains because of me’, right? I want him to think of biting into the ripest peach, childhood memories of summertime, if that makes sense? I want the illusion of warmth in the middle of winter, is that too much to ask?”

Bethany just stood there looking at him and he felt himself spiraling, his breathing ratcheting up as he realized he should have stayed with the green. *Jesus,* of course the green was more appropriate.

“Papaya ice cream,” Bethany said.

“Papaya ice cream,” he agreed with a sigh of relief and a soft smile. “Bethany, I do believe we’re beginning to understand one another. I thank you for your counsel.”

“Alright,” she replied with a shrug. “You have something in your teeth.”

His hands grabbed frantically for the mirror he kept on his desk, flipping the little disc around and baring his teeth. Poppy seed. That woman was a lifesaver. He really hoped no one would maim her.

There was a knock at the door and he fumbled the mirror back into place and sat back in his seat in what he hoped was a relaxed enough pose. “Come in!”

The door opened and he was momentarily frozen. He knew instantly that his intuition had been right; Will was fraternizing with the nurse. Mathew should have known better. Frederick was a little angry for a moment because this was supposed to be a prison, not a club med for

God's sake, but this was so much juicier than anything he had so far on Will Graham. It would be impossible to ignore. If there was any way he could get one over on Hannibal, could show off his control of the situation for once in their years-long acquaintance, it would be something below board. The man was just as much a sucker for gossip as Frederick was, and this would hurt, even as it entertained.

"Mr. Graham," he said, smiling out of turn. "Please have a seat."

Will managed to talk through all of his symptoms, the fever, the sleep study, everything, without feeling too terrible. He just imagined he was talking to any other medical doctor and tried to be as clinically descriptive as he could to avoid feeling like Chilton was getting into his head. He just needed to remain a bit removed, and he'd make it through the next hour fine.

"And what about your interpersonal life?" Chilton asked, his lips giving him away.

"Are you trying to ask about Hannibal?" Will replied, annoyed.

"Tedious, I know," Chilton crooned. "But it does have a great deal to do with your mental health. It helps inmates to have outside contact. I find they get through the week a bit easier when they have mail day to look forward to."

"Can I be frank?" Will asked.

"Be my guest," Chilton replied, smile widening. "I always like to encourage an atmosphere of open discourse with my patients. It is of utmost import that the patient be able to portray their inner life to me in as much detail as possible. Please, go on."

Will took a deep breath, relishing the fact that this would surely make it back to Hannibal. This greasy little man was going to go straight to him, so he might as well deliver a message.

"Hannibal Lecter," he said. "can go fuck himself."

Chilton snorted out a laugh and looked away nervously. "Well, I suppose-"

"He's bad fucking news, Frederick," Will interrupted, trying to drive the point home, glaring at him. "I'd tell you to stay away from him if you'd listen."

Chilton's cheeks were red, as if he really understood the shit he'd stepped in, and he was clearing his throat and tidying his papers out of nervousness. Will had a flash of Hannibal ripping out the man's tongue. It was only in his vision for a second, but he felt it like he was a damn lightning rod. He shook it off and looked out the windows. One more hour.

Chapter End Notes

Will: Thank you for being kind to me

Mathew: No prob, babygirl. lol. BTW I got us lunch

Will: How can I ever repay you?

Mathew: Kill your ex with me?

Will, at the same exact time: Suck you off?

Matthew + Will: 👀😳👀🤑👀😎

Distance

Chapter Summary

Hannibal gets some bad news and struggles to stay professional.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, sorry about the wait on this but real life got in the way. Thank you for being patient and I hope you like watching this asshole get his life ruined! 😅😅

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal wove his way through the moving pods and tarp covered furniture on his way to Bedelia's front door. A fine dew covered everything and the rain the night before left the asphalt black. A few moving people milled about, keeping the damp from ruining any of Bedelia's things. He was disappointed enough to admit to himself that he hadn't seen it coming. He thought he had a little more time with her before she withdrew. He was focusing too much on Will again, lost in the memories of him and erratic visions of the future. He was in limbo, everything slipping from his control. His stomach was sour as he knocked once on the front door.

"Hannibal," Bedelia said, eyes a bit distant, possibly sedated. "Come in."

Hannibal followed her into the house, his face burning at the sudden heat. She had at least one fireplace going to avoid the cold coming in from the men going in and out of the front door. The only furniture not covered in plastic were the fan back chairs facing each other in the middle of the room. It felt like a lion pit, like the last colosseum battle between two adversaries.

"Am I to understand you are moving, Bedelia?" he asked as they sat. She didn't provide them with any alcohol. On guard.

Bedelia crossed her legs and nodded, eyes boring into him. "I have been approached by the authorities about your involvement with the Will Graham case. It has brought up some issues that I have failed to deal with properly. I'm taking a sabbatical for my mental health. I'm leaving for Europe in the morning."

Hannibal felt his stomach flip. First Jack, now Bedelia. He wondered who would turn against him next. Alana, his mind supplied. He shook it aside and crossed one leg carefully over the other. "How long do you expect to be gone?"

“Indefinitely,” she replied.

“Indefinitely is a long time,” he shot back, trying to keep his anger under control.

“My life here has come to an end, Hannibal. I can no longer ignore the danger you pose. The FBI is noticing your pattern,” she explained.

Danger. *Danger.* He wanted to scream at her, to assure her that this step, this bid for escape would be her downfall. He wanted to tell her that no matter where she went, he would find her, and no matter how she begged, he would end her. (A small part of him wanted to kneel at her feet and rest his head in her lap, seeking forgiveness.) He bit back the myriad of responses and refused to look away.

“What pattern?” he asked, daring her to speak the truth.

“The pattern where you drive vulnerable people to violence,” she said, unflinching, “that pattern. Will Graham is just a variation on a theme. Who will be next? Franklyn Froideveaux? I’m not interested in sticking around to find out.”

The silence that settled between them tense. Conflating the two men was nothing if not distasteful and he wanted to voice that. Before he could say something he regretted, she spoke again.

“I told you that involving yourself with the FBI was a bad idea. You’ve had your fun, Hannibal. I’m afraid that is how they will catch you, if you don’t run first.”

“I don’t *run* from anything,” he spat, sick at the inference.

“You ran from Italy once,” she disagreed. “And, like many of us, you ran from your home. When you think of yourself as a god, you stop yourself from making human decisions. You have human decisions to make now.”

“Decisions are best made with good counsel. You will take that from me, now, when I most need it?” Hannibal asked.

Bedelia sighed and sat back in her seat, looking worn. “I haven’t been good counsel for some time. I think I was, at first.”

“What changed?” Hannibal demanded. “You’ve known me for years. Why choose now to leave?”

“Your...infatuation with Will Graham has brought out a side of you I don’t know how to help. While I think that getting in touch with your emotions is an important step in your personal growth, I don’t think you are approaching this relationship with anything but desperation. Your attachment is detrimental to you both.”

Hannibal’s head tipped to the side, as if he could see her better from a different angle. He chewed on his lip for a moment as she sat vibrating in her seat. “Attachment?”

“Love has frightened you, I think,” Bedelia allowed, her voice wavering slightly. “You are dangerous when frightened.”

Hannibal finally looked away from her, eyes falling to the floor. He thought about killing her, about convincing himself she would turn on him sooner or later, and ending it all now. Her neck would snap so easily.

“Don’t contact him, Hannibal. For your own sake, let him go.”

Her voice felt like it was coming through a filter, through the beaconing crash of waves.

“This will only end in tragedy.”

He pulled the waves around him, holding the silence they brought tight, and strode out of the house before she said another word.

“I saw you at the opera last night,” Franklyn said, bouncing frenetically on the edge of his seat. “Tobias convinced me to not bother you. He said something about you surely needing your privacy, but I think he might just be a little jealous. He doesn’t know me as well as you.”

Hannibal didn’t care and he was having trouble staying professional. He barely even prepared for that day’s appointments and the only thing he could think was that he still had time to catch Bedelia before her flight.

“We let parts of ourselves be known in therapy that we might keep hidden otherwise. What do you think it is you hide from Tobias?” Hannibal asked.

“I mean,” Franklyn tried. “there has always been an intensity to my thoughts that I keep under wraps. He would think I care too deeply. You understand.”

“Are you in love with him?” Hannibal asked. There wasn’t an appointment where the man didn’t bring Tobias up. There was an obsessive quality to his attention.

“What? No!” Franklyn replied, flushing up to his neck. “He’s my best friend. He’s, well…not that there’s anything wrong with-“

“Are you attracted to him?” Hannibal clarified. He was definitely right up against the issue, whether Franklyn was ready to admit it or not.

Franklyn sat back in his seat in agitation and stared up at the ceiling. “No, not entirely. Attraction is a strong words, isn’t it? Do I feel drawn to him? Of course, he’s the kind of man I want to be. He’s self-possessed, refined. I just, I couldn’t imagine kissing him.”

“Physical intimacy is difficult for you,” Hannibal noted. “How about emotional intimacy?”

Franklyn seemed to melt into his chair. “I keep a distance.”

“Distance might keep you safe temporarily,” Hannibal said, feeling like he was speaking to his younger self. “In the long run, it undermines the very foundations of a relationship.”

Franklyn looked down at his hands and nodded solemnly while Hannibal pondered the physical distance between him and Will.

Chapter End Notes

Bedelia: you're dangerous so I'm leaving

Hannibal: are you kidding me? I'm dangerous? That is so insulting!! I should kill you for saying that!!!

Bedelia: yikes (pronounced like Nike's)

Home

Chapter Summary

Will gets an update on his home and his pack from Alana, and gets an unlikely ally. Freddie Lounds tells the whole world about the breakup.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was ten degrees above freezing, but the rain still sounded like slush on the windows, a constant murmur in the background as Freddie worked. Mid January was always wet, and since her office space was all the way across town she found herself working from home on the worst days. That was better than getting hit by some asshole who had forgotten how to drive in the rain or some out of towner with their eyes on the shops instead of the street. The rain changed pitch as wind started to holler outside, hitting the windows and brick of the building from a new angle. She turned her music up and tried to figure out how to write up what was going on with Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter.

As far as she was concerned, it was the breakup of the century, and needed to be treated as such. She poured herself another cup of black coffee and pulled the blanket on her lap closer around her, then hit the button on her phone to listen back to the recording.

“Graham has told multiple people that Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper.” her informant on the phone said. “The consensus is that he got too close while working the Ripper case, so Lecter framed him. The fact that they were, I mean, you know, they were dating makes it more complicated, doesn’t it? Anyway, I was wondering if you wanted to go to dinner on-“

She stopped the recording and thumbed through to the financial papers she’d acquired. Hannibal Lecter had paid the latest water and electricity bills on the property in Wolf Trap. How possible was it, she wondered, that Lecter was a serial killer head-over-heels in love with the man tasked with catching him? How possible was it that one of the most gruesome killers in the last century was a man that couldn’t easily be extricated from his role in high society, his face on every local art event’s social media page? It seemed almost outlandish, like he was a Batman villain or something.

“Could Baltimore’s most eligible bachelor be back on the market?” she dictated into her recorder. “If sources are to be believed, his onetime sweetheart is now insisting Hannibal Lecter is none other than the Chesapeake Ripper, and that was enough to call off any pending nuptials.”

She opened her photos on her laptop and scrolled back to the second picture of Hannibal that she had published. He was in the back of an ambulance, covered in blood, and in retrospect

looked like a killer. She felt a chill run through her as she remembered how the situation had unsettled her at the time. There was definitely something scary about Hannibal, even if he wasn't the Ripper. She wondered briefly how dangerous it would be to call him out.

"Suck it up, buttercup," she said to herself, opening a blank word document and getting to work. "This article isn't going to write itself."

Will didn't know whether his scheduled meeting that day with Alana had to do with his case or not. It was just as likely that Jack was trying to get him to change his story or elaborate by sending her in, and he hadn't heard from the man in over a week. The meeting, therefore, was a little less than welcome when it rolled around.

Matthew walked him into an all white meeting room with a metal table in the middle and sat him down in a plastic chair. "You'll remain cuffed to the table during the allotted time," Matthew said, carefully pulling Will's cuffed hands to the table and attaching them with another chain to a metal loop. "When the meeting is over I'll be back to bring you to your cell. Usual rules apply; don't spit, don't touch, don't try to get out of your seat."

"Thank you," Will replied, his mind still spinning around what to expect. The room was cold, and felt even colder as Matthew left his side. He closed his eyes at the snick of the door closing behind him and a blanket of quiet came down around him.

He'd woken that morning to Abel telling him that his accusations of Hannibal were all over the Internet. Freddie Lounds had written up an article about the two men and their relationship with the assistance of a jailhouse snoop. Abel swore it wasn't him, but Will didn't know who to believe. What he did know was that Freddie was putting herself in danger by pointing a finger, and Hannibal would surely have something to say about it.

"Will."

Alana came in through the second exit, dressed like a lawyer with her hair up in a bun. She looked drawn, like she was losing sleep. Will was reminded again that his life wasn't the only one thrown into turmoil by Hannibal Lecter.

"Hi," he tried as she sat across from him. "It's good to see a friend."

Alana smiled, her face still sad, and grasped his hands. A buzzer went off and she backed away.

"No touching," came through the loudspeaker overhead, a voice Will didn't recognize.

"No touching," he echoed, giving Alana a weak smile.

"Sorry," she said, placing her hands in her lap. "How are you, Will?"

"About as good as can be, what with the being framed for murder and all," he replied. "How are the dogs?"

That drew an actual smile from Alana and she told him all about her new dog Applesauce, and how the rest of the pack were helping her settle in. “Everybody got their flea medication yesterday, and Applesauce only managed to mangle one of my slippers while I was busy.”

“How is Winston?” he asked. Winston was the newest of the pack and he had worried about the dog. The mutt had only just gotten used to the pack, and now he’d lost his home base.

“It’s a good thing he’s chipped,” she said. “He’s an escape artist.”

Will’s stomach dropped. He didn’t want to think of all the ways he was failing his dogs. “Get picked up by the pound?”

“No,” she replied softly. “He always just goes home.”

Will was overwhelmed by the word, by the thought. Home, his house in the woods filled with a mix of his and the past owner’s things. Home, a place he’d never really settled into. Had he taken it for granted all those years?

“Hannibal was there to greet Winston the last time,” Alana added.

“What?” Will asked, stunned into waiting for an answer.

“A pipe broke in your kitchen,” she explained. “He had someone over making sure the repair was weatherproofed.”

“I don’t want to talk about Hannibal,” he said, voice tight with all the pent up anger.

The way she looked at him bordered on pity. “He loves you, Will.”

“Oh, I know,” he replied humorlessly. “I only wish he didn’t.”

Alana leaned in, remembering to keep her hands to herself this time. “Freddie Lounds is saying you think he’s a killer. What on earth is going on?”

“I think he’s a killer,” Will admitted, voice flat. “And I think you should stay away from him.”

Alana sat back and Will looked away from her face. He couldn’t take the shock there. He felt the room change, felt her pull back emotionally.

“You know, Will,” she said, “there are plenty of people telling me I should stay away from you for the same reason.”

“Well, maybe you should listen to them,” he said bitterly. “I’m not sure I’m the best at decision making, when it comes down to it. Might be a good idea for you to leave us both behind.”

“I’m not leaving you behind, Will,” Alana replied, sounding a bit pissed off. “I’m taking care of your dogs, and Hannibal is taking care of your house, and your lawyer is working on your case. You don’t get to go lone wolf on us, not when we’re still fighting for you.”

Will threw up his hands, cuffs rattling, and acquiesced, leaving them in an uncomfortable silence. It took a few minutes for either of them to talk again, and after that it was just about the case.

Will was rattled by his meeting with Alana. He didn't want Hannibal in his house and the fact that the man was just seeping further into his life while he was in jail was terrifying. He was shaking with it. What else could Hannibal do to him, what might he find if he ever got out?

"Any news of home?" Abel asked from the cell beside his.

Home .

Will closed his eyes and disappeared into himself, walking through his house in his mind, trying to figure out which pipe it was that could have burst. Was it really cold enough to have a pipe rupture, or was Hannibal doing something in there that he needed to cover up. The house had been messy when he left, and if what he'd seen in his years in law enforcement taught him what to expect after a search, it was worse now. He could imagine Hannibal going through his things, touching his clothes. Disgust rolled through him.

He must have been deep in his thoughts, because he didn't hear the gate open or Matthew approaching, and only blinked open his eyes after his name was called several times. He looked out of the cell and was greeted by a familiar silhouette lurking behind Matthew. He'd met the petite blond woman at the opera, she was Hannibal Lecter's psychiatrist.

"Someone here to see you. You've got five minutes," Matthew droned. "Don't approach the bars, don't spit, don't urinate on our guest."

Matthew nodded to the woman and left. She stepped forward slowly, eyes on the line drawn on the floor.

"I've forgotten your name," Will said. "Though not your face. Are you here for him?"

"Because of, not *for,* " she clarified. "Bedelia Du Maurier."

"Bedelia," Will acknowledged. "To what do I owe the honor, then?"

"I'm just stopping by to let you know I'm leaving the country. Your circumstances have made it clear to me that anyone who gets too close to *him* is in grave danger. I may have let his charm hide that from me before, but I can't now," she replied.

Will sighed, wondering how Hannibal was taking the loss of his psychiatrist. "And why are you telling me this? Why come all the way here?"

Bedelia frowned at him and took another step forward, eyeing the end of the hallway where a guard was surely standing and watching. "I thought you should know, before I leave…"

"Know what?" Will asked, growing agitated with the woman. She was close enough that he could smell her perfume.

Bedelia took two more large steps forward and grasped the bars. There was shouting from her left, but Will watched her, transfixed, as she leaned in to whisper to him. His throat was tight, and there was air rushing in his ears, but he heard her nonetheless.

“I believe you,” she said, stepping back just in time to avoid a security guard's ire.

Will watched her be led away and felt his ears ringing. He had the sudden feeling that he might never make it out of Hannibal’s life alive.

Chapter End Notes

Alana: Hannibal loves you. Why are you saying he’s a killer??☹️

Will: Because he’s a killer.😐

Alana: well, I never...😟

Bedelia: He’s right 💅👠💋

Guidance

Chapter Summary

Will and Matthew get some alone time, and Chilton picks Will's brain.

Chapter Notes

Matthew/Will chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first day of depositions went by in a blur. Will's colleagues explained his apparent crimes, detailed all the snares Hannibal had set for him. It was shocking to see how early in their relationship Hannibal had begun to betray him. On one hand he saved Will's life when Stammets had planned to plant him, but that night Hannibal must have driven the car into his lake. It was meticulous, the way Hannibal created two distinct roads. Will's resolve to destroy him ratched up as his blood pressure soared. He sweated through his jumpsuit, skin sticky and cold, hairs prickling on his arms.

Being allowed a shower after court was as close to a religious experience as he had ever felt. The water finally started turning hot and he was able to connect with his surroundings. Matthew was on the other side of the cement block wall, Will could hear him.

"I can hear you over there," he said, anger and exhaustion turning to arousal under his skin.

"Would you mind if I joined you, Mr Graham?" Matthew asked.

"We'll get caught," Will countered.

Matthew walked closer, his voice coming from right around the corner then. "I turned off the sensors for the door locks for the next half hour. Just a bit of code," he explained. "And I set out the janitor signs. It's just us."

Will let out a low laugh at his luck, at this opportunity to redirect all his frenetic energy into something much more enticing than the same old anger. "In that case, I wouldn't mind in the least," he allowed.

He heard the telltale sounds of zippers and keys jangling and shoes dropping to the ground, and then Matthew was there, standing in the doorway, naked and grinning. Will felt the thrill of being looked at by the shark of a man, unable to look anywhere but his face. He nodded

his head and turned back to the spray of the shower, continuing to soap himself up. Matthew came up beside him and took the bar of soap from his hand, rubbing it across his chest. Will finally looked over and saw him in the light, muscles tight and moving under soft skin, an Adonis, a perfect specimen.

“Jesus, you’re ripped,” Will found himself saying, watching Matthew’s hand as it made its way down his chest to his abdomen. “You need to drink more water. Are you a boxer?”

Matthew chuckled and grinned wider. “Yessir,” he agreed, leaning into the spray of the showerhead and drinking down several big gulps of water.

Will laughed as he realized he was taking his advice. *More water,* Christ, he was literal. Against all odds, it was endearing. “You look like you could do some damage,” he murmured, soapy hand closing around his cock.

“Yessir,” Matthew agreed.

“No more yessir’s,” Will snorted. “You take well to direction, don’t you?”

Matthew nodded, eyes rolling back into his head as his hand mimicked Will’s on his own cock. “Military prep,” he answered obediently. “Then a few psych hospitals.”

Will nodded, sympathetic. “If you’re looking for guidance, I don’t know if I can be that,” he admitted, waves of emotion rolling over him as he thought of how he might take Matthew down with him, inadvertently, on purpose, due to fate.

“I can stand on my own two feet,” Matthew assured him. “We’re alike. Solitary.”

“Self-contained,” Will agreed, stroking himself with growing urgency. He couldn’t take his eyes off Matthew’s abdomen, the way it flexed and shuddered as he fucked up into his hand, thumb brushing over the head. Will mirrored the movements and found himself right up against the edge. “I’m close,” he whispered, brow furrowing in concentration.

“I’d love to see it,” Matthew admitted, eyes focusing on the space between them, where their fists nearly touched on the upstroke.

“Christ,” Will cursed, one hand reaching out to brace on Matthew’s shoulder. The man took his weight and he felt himself trip into orgasm, hips thrusting and seeking out that animalistic end. He tightened his fist and rode it out, letting the pleasure roll over him in pulses until he couldn’t stand it anymore.

“Fuck,” Matthew hissed, starting to come as well, spilling over his hand.

Will giggled and leaned in to kiss him, breathing roughly through his nose. Matthew kissed him back for a few fevered moments and then broke away to breathe deeply.

“You know,” he said, face flushed and lips shining red, “you could just let me kill him. For you.”

Will drew in a surprised breath and tried to imagine it. Could he get out without them catching Hannibal? Could they catch him if he was dead? Would it matter if they could catch him, if he was dead?

“He’s a pro,” Will said, trying to see it with clear eyes. “He’ll be hard to take down hand-to-hand.”

“Bear tranq gun,” Matthew replied smoothly.

Will laughed and sucked in a long breath. “Well now you’re turning me on,” he teased.

Matthew laughed along with him and then they cleaned up. It was so easy, so *so* easy.

All the years of waiting were paying off. For the first time in his professional career, Frederick had something everyone else wanted. Freddie Lounds was writing up more and more articles about Will, had sent him a letter requesting an interview with the man, and that was a boost to his ego, but the major win was his invite to dine with none other than Hannibal Lecter.

With the evening hanging over him, he requested a last minute meeting with Will, in an attempt to get a little more info out of him that he could entice Hannibal with. He had the recordings, of course, and knew what Will was saying, but he wanted to get one more impression out of the man.

“Come in,” he said, just as the knock to his door came.

The door swung open and Will was brought in, mouth a tight line under the clear bite mask. There was something about the way he moved that suggested he was feeling more in his element, and Frederick wondered what exactly he and Matthew had been up to. He’d have to check the cameras after their meeting.

Will fell back into his seat and spread his legs, glaring at him with unabashed distaste. Something turned in Frederick’s stomach and he felt suddenly small. There was a look in Will’s eyes that made him feel like prey.

“Thank you, Matthew,” he choked out, grasping for something solid. “We’ll be fine alone now.”

Matthew nodded and whistled to himself as he left and Frederick felt that tingle of anxiety again.

“You look nervous, Frederick,” Will said as soon as the door was closed.

“Well, we’ve both had a long day, haven’t we?” Frederick replied. “I hear you’re sticking with a not guilty plea.”

“I’m not the high-functioning sociopath they’re looking for,” Will answered easily.

Frederick gave him a tight smile. “Of course not. You only stood on the sidelines and caught his attention. Is there a reason you haven’t told the court who your benefactor is?”

“The Ripper is hardly my benefactor,” Will countered. “He killed someone who abducted me, but he also planted his car on my property. Even then he hadn’t decided if he was going to frame me or not.”

This was more than Will usually spoke, and Frederick found himself wanting to hear more. “When did he decide?”

Will moved his hands in his lap, cuffs jangling. “He held out about as long as I did. I think he was hoping that I would quit when I realized who he was, what he’d done to protect me.”

“Quit looking for him?” Frederick asked.

“Quit the FBI,” Will corrected. “Or quit consulting at least.”

“But you didn’t quit,” Frederick replied. “You tried to record him without his knowledge.”

Will’s eyes shot up at that and Frederick felt sure he was right. The recording had only been a rumor before then.

“Hard to catch the devil in a lie,” Will said, eyes going dark. “Silver tongue, and all. You won’t make the same mistake, now, will you? Tell me you’re not flirting with catching him yourself.”

Frederick sat back at that and looked out the window on the far wall. “I would only need to do that if the Ripper was still free. Many in the FBI think you’re him. Shouldn’t my flirtation end with you?”

Will’s lips curled back and he looked Frederick over carefully, obviously weighing what to say next. “He’s smoke, Frederick. He’ll slip right through your fingers.”

“Good thing it’s up to Jack Crawford, then,” Frederick replied, still unsure of Will’s relationship with the man.

“I’ve helped Jack all I can,” Will said. “It’s up to him to take the next step. I only wish he’d hurry up.”

Frederick weighed his options and brushed out the folds on his pant leg, letting one knee cross over the other. “Do you see Jack as a father figure?”

Will huffed out a sigh, breath fogging up the mask. “Jack sees himself as a father figure. He never had any kids. His agents fill that spot for him, I think. The new one’s, at least.”

“But not you,” Frederick pressed.

“I’m not interested in guidance, and I don’t need anyone’s forgiveness,” Will countered. “Plus, I already had a father. No need for a second.”

“Let’s talk about your father,” Frederick suggested.

Will simply sighed louder and rolled his eyes, but for once he remained willing to talk.

Chapter End Notes

Matthew: I own a bear tranquilizer gun and I know how to use it 🔪🔪🔪

Will: and you’re telling me this AFTER I came!?! 👅💦👹

Killer

Chapter Summary

Abel talks to Will about Hannibal, and we see how Hannibal managed to get fresh meat for his dinner with Chilton.

Chapter Notes

Surprise update!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will rested uneasily back against the bunk when he was finally back in his cell from his meeting in Chilton's office. The psychiatrist had gotten him thinking about Hannibal again, and he wanted to go on a tirade. His hands were shaking.

"You okay, Kid?" Abel asked, giving him a way out.

"You know how you said you knew I wouldn't kill Hannibal, cause I don't have it in me?" Will asked bitterly. "It was a close thing. I got him a knife for Christmas, and, my God, did I fantasize about using it on him. Took work to fight against that impulse."

"And look where it got you. At least I have the satisfaction of knowing my wife isn't out there having fun without me," Abel quipped.

"I needed to do it by the book, though," Will explained, it felt a little silly then. "Scientifically. I had to gather evidence once I realized what he was. I was behind by a long shot."

"Left in the dust," Abel agreed.

Will sighed, nodding. "I was outmatched."

The lights buzzed and went out, on timers that were set for sundown. There was still a glow coming through the gate down the end of the hallway, though it was turning from golden to bluish. There was a long pause and Will felt himself drifting.

"Tell me about the Ripper's crimes," Abel whispered. "Just the last three."

Will snorted and laid back, his head towards the metal bar wall. He imagined Abel was laying in the same position, in the same sad outfit. He tried to think of aspects of the crime that Abel

might not have read about in the newspapers or on the web. Abel knew the basics, for sure, so he placed himself in front of Stammets' corpse where it was tied back around a tree, focused on what the reporters missed.

"Stammets was the first flirt. He was the bouquet, filled with his own "home-grown" mushrooms and mushrooms of natural origin. Inside those bounds, that layer of irony, were Hannibal's favorite flowers. They made a perfect little biome, all growing together at the edge of a forest. Some of these plants grow five years before they make it to maturity and flower, and they all had the same manure feeding them, this is a place he loves. He nurtured them. Then harvested a whole season's worth of plant matter for one bouquet. It showed that he is meticulous in everything, and maybe that is how he'll get caught. They'll find his second home by the flowers, eventually."

"He couldn't help but inject some of himself into the declaration of intent," Abel murmured.

"Mmm," Will agreed, closing his eyes. "He got pushed into a sounder by that first kill. Once he started, he had to kill twice more. It's a pattern he's kept for years, an impulse. To regain power, we have Leda and the Swan. That's him asking for my hand, publicly. He's showing off, he's signaling his intended relationship dynamic. It was blatantly erotic."

"He went with you to the scene of his own crime?" Abel pressed.

"Yeah, Abel. As I said; blatantly erotic," Will clarified.

"Dirty boys," Abel teased. "He sounds like a real romantic, your Ripper. I wouldn't have thought to woo someone with a body, but you seem pretty well wooed."

"Some things are more comfortable from a distance. It's all background dressing in the end. He paints a picture, you can't help but feel a certain way in response. I can't feel bad about what it brought out in me anymore," Will acknowledged. "I still tried to do the right thing."

"The third murder?" Abel asked, redirecting him a bit.

Will didn't really mind, it was like telling a bedtime story, and it was Abel's story. It was a bit of back and forth. "The conductor."

The conductor had knelt on the opera house stage on his knees with his heart in his hands. Will remembered his chest opening with a crack, all his missing organs.

"That was to show he could get his way in every aspect of his life. He wanted the first time that I went to the opera to be perfect, his idea of perfect, and this poor guy got in the way," Will sighed deeply. "Hannibal is the worst kind of micromanager, gets into all your seams. He infiltrates your life and then moves on, leaving you with all these holes."

"Can I ask you a question?" Abel asked.

Will felt for the envelope under his pillow and held it up to his nose. Hannibal's cologne surrounded him, filled up his senses, and he wondered how it would feel to know he was dead. Relief? Despair? Did he deserve one or the other? "Go for it," he murmured.

“Since he was a cannibal, and chef...was the food good?” Abel asked, his voice tight with concentration. “The meat.”

“Always,” Will sighed, defeated. “Never eaten better in my life.”

There was a long pause and he tried to think about what Abel was getting from all this. Company, gossip. He wondered if making nice with him would put him in some danger. He was a killer, after all, had killed his wife and her family on thanksgiving at the table. There would be no guilt putting Abel in Hannibal’s sights.

“Goodnight, Kid,” Abel said finally, grunting as he rolled onto his side.

“Night, Abel,” Will replied.

“Yeah, yeah, shut up!” someone in a far cell yelled.

Will stuck the letter back under his pillow and tried to imagine Hannibal there with him. How would he feel?

An hour after the sun dipped below the trees that lined the edge of the block, Hannibal rode his motorcycle out of the garage and pulled the helmet on. The drive to the freeway entrance was enough to have his mood rising above the fog of dread he’d been living in. Once he was at the freeway entrance and stationary he played the old voicemail message on repeat, fed into the Bluetooth speakers in the helmet. He tucked his phone back away and held his breath as he waited for a green light.

“Hannibal?” Will’s sleep logged voice asked, no, begged. “Hannibal, I think there’s someone here. I need you...snk…”Hannibal? Hannibal, I think-“

The phrases repeated over and over again and Hannibal washed himself in Will’s panic, in his trust, even subconsciously. The third exit brought the navigation system voice over everything and directed him to the off ramp. The motel was visible from the freeway, it’s large red wall lit with built-in spotlights, the Quality inn. He pulled into the parking lot and parked behind the dumpster, leaving his helmet on for anonymity. He recognized the car, the one he’d planted a tracker on earlier that week, and waited in the shadows to watch the man the World would soon know as the Angel Maker.

After five good minutes he shouldered his way out of the front office, one cup of steaming coffee in each hand, not a lid in sight. Hannibal had the impulse to spill them on him, to see how hot they were. He pushed it down and used the fact that the didn’t have a hand to check the lock on the door to hold it slightly open with one toe. He waited a second before opening the door and walking in after the man.

It was all instinct after that point, his hand locking the door behind him, his feet leading him confidently into the man’s room. “I don’t believe we’ve met,” he stated, voice muffled through the helmet.

Elliot Budish, startled into dropping the coffees, turned and looked Hannibal over. What he saw was written on his face, even before he spoke. “You are Death,” he stammered, eyes wild, “come upon a Steed of Famine.”

He took a few steps closer and Eilliot fell dramatically to his knees, unaware of his knee crushing one of the paper coffee cups.

“Take me, then, Beast!” he growled, supplicating himself to his vision of Death.

Hannibal was annoyed. He’d wanted some big fight, not this surrender. He wanted to hurt him now. Instead of medicating him to an easy death, as he planned to do after overtaking him, Hannibal punched his throat hard, two knuckles crunching the fragile bones and cartilage there. Elliot coughed and gasped and tried to breathe as he wailed in pain, the sound coming out like an overheated vacuum cleaner. Hannibal walked in a circle behind him and snapped his neck in two clean movements. The body slumped to the ground, twitching, and he looked around the room for the go bag.

By the door, a black bag sat, zippered top open. Inside Hannibal found Elliot’s kill kit. He took a deep breath in recognition and pulled out the hand saw. He would serve hind-shank with a reconstituted stew recipe. He turned and looked over the body, hand on his phone in his pocket, starting up some swan lake rendition he’d been sent by a college. The music started up and he pulled out the plastic drop cloth, shaking it out and laying it down in the middle of the room. He pulled the body square on top of it and knelt to cut through the clothes with his pocket knife. It was going to be a quick business, and that was good. It was all good.

Hours later, in his basement Hannibal was prepping the meat, removing the thick upper thigh of both legs and cutting them in half. Four pieces of meat on the bone were placed to the side on a metal tray, stripped of skin and prepped for cooking. They looked close enough to pork for him to really appreciate the effort he put into it. Frederick would not be disappointed.

Chapter End Notes

The AngelMaker meeting the Ripper: I’m your biggest fan, Death.

Hannibal: All these nicknames, *murder*

Pied Piper

Chapter Summary

Hannibal has Dr. Chilton and a mystery guest over for dinner, and the truth comes out.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal felt little benefit from killing the Angelmaker by the time his first guest arrived, the feeling of control long gone and leaving his muscles sore. Alana rang the doorbell and he tossed the towel over his shoulder and greeted her with a glass of white wine.

“Thank you,” she said, taking a long sip. Her nose and cheeks were red from the cold and her chestnut curls rested beautifully on her shoulders.

Hannibal helped her out of her coat and closed the front door, walking with her back into the kitchen. She took the only seat and he hovered back over the stove, still working on prep.

“I’m glad to see you,” he said. “It’s good to see a friend.”

She snorted into her drink and gave a comically big sigh. “Will said the same thing to me. He’s haunted, Hannibal. I don’t know what Chilton can do for him.”

“Well,” Hannibal reminded her, “you can ask him tonight.”

Alana looked at him suspiciously, pursed her lips. “And you told him I was coming?”

“And miss an opportunity to see him scramble without a script?” Hannibal asked, smiling at her, teasing.

Alana laughed, but it was weak. She seemed unsettled.

“We must keep Frederick on his toes, otherwise he dominates dinnertime conversation,” he explained further.

She shrugged and he went back to cooking. He was comfortable, he assured himself. He was in his home, in his own kitchen. He reminded himself to take in the smells and ground himself there.

“Will is suspicious of you, you know?” Alana asked after a moment. “Because we both know Chilton will bring that up. He’s a blowhard, he won’t be able to keep it to himself.”

“And his words will become slings and arrows, and cut me down in my home?” Hannibal lightly accused.

“Even a pebble in a shoe can cause problems,” she countered. “I’m just suggesting you brace yourself.”

Hannibal brought the two large Dutch ovens out of the oven and set them on trivets on the counter. He let her watch him move in silence as he pulled off the lid of first one, and then the other, and set them aside. His silence was his control. He brought out a kitchen blowtorch and crisped the peaks of whipped garlic potatoes surrounding the bone in meat.

Just as silence was settling around them, the doorbell rang. Hannibal set his potholders aside and left Alana to greet Frederick at the door.

“Hannibal Lecter,” Frederick preened. “How long has it been since I was at your table?”

“Much too long,” Hannibal replied. “Please, come in.”

Frederick handed over a bottle of gin with a bow around the neck and followed Hannibal into the kitchen, his footsteps faltered as he saw Alana Bloom.

“Hello, Frederick,” she said, raising her glass.

“Well, well, Doctor Bloom,” he croaked. “If I had known you were joining us I would have brought you a gift as well.”

Hannibal set the bottle of gin aside and went back to the stove, getting ready to move things to the dining room. “I only added to the party when I realized how large my order from the butcher was,” he lied easily. “My eyes may have been bigger than my stomach. I hope you don’t mind.”

Fredrick plastered on a false smile and did his best to sound positive. “The more the merrier. Any opportunity to pick the mind of another of my esteemed colleagues is greatly appreciated.”

“In that case,” Hannibal replied, lifting a pot in one hand and a Dutch oven in the other, “let the games begin.”

Frederick’s nerves were acting up. He had planned on coming in with all the info and all the power, and now he had to adjust to Alana’s presence, she always pulled things back from the edge and tried for a sad version of what she saw as bipartisanship. Plus, he had to be less honest, as her morals were more strict than Hannibal’s. He sucked on his teeth in agitation.

“Homemade stew with bone in pork thigh,” Hannibal said, dishing them out hearty portions. “Baby carrots, pearl onions, fingerling potatoes. Garlic mashed potatoes and mushroom couscous along with homemade sourdough as our sides.”

“It looks delicious,” Alana said. “I still don’t know how you find the time.”

She was sucking up, and Frederick wondered if there was something else between them, or if she just really wanted to impress him. He watched her take the first bite and pushed away the thoughts of it being human. Surely, Will was delusional on that part.

“Less adventurous than your usual fare,” he noted, spearing a carrot with his fork and bringing it to his lips.

“Stew is always a crowd pleaser,” Hannibal replied, raising a glass. “To swift justice, and returning friends.”

Alana murmured the same and Frederick marveled at the fact that Hannibal was going in a different direction than he thought. Was he saying he thought Will was innocent, or did he consider Frederick a friend? If what Will said was true, the whole situation was Hannibal’s fault. He couldn’t see the through line, couldn’t imagine what was going to happen next.

“Am I being presumptuous to think you invited both of us here for our impression of Will Graham?” Frederick asked, pulling off a piece of bread and dipping it into the stew. There was a moment where he tasted it and joked with himself internally that the stew was so good he wouldn’t really care if it was people.

“To think it, no,” Hannibal allowed, playful as he continued. “To say it, on the other hand…”

“We’ve already talked a bit about Will,” Alana interjected.

Frederick grinned and leaned closer. “Did you tell Hannibal what Will had to say when you dropped by? I listen through all the recordings, of course. My patients sign away most of their rights when they enter the program, privacy is no different.”

Alana frowned at him, brow furrowed, and turned to speak to Hannibal instead. “I’m as honest with him as a patient, but there’s no assumption of doctor-patient confidentiality.”

“He’s angry,” Frederick said, watching Alana pour herself another drink.

“He’s paranoid,” she countered. “And he’s not in his right mind. He sees all these connections where there are none; classic trauma response.”

“He told Alana you’re a killer, and me you’re bad news. How honest are we meant to think he’s being?” Frederick asked, eating nearly half the loaf of bread and a second serving of mashed potatoes.

“I’d love to know how Will is taking to psychiatry. Does he talk to you, besides mentioning me?” Hannibal asked, slicing pork off the bone and handing it across.

Frederick held out his plate and accepted the meat, placing it in front of him and picking up a fork and knife. “You know I can’t answer that, but you’ve given us such wonderful food, I can’t help but give you a juicy tidbit back. The first time we met for a session I told him it would go by faster if he just answered my questions. Do you know what he said to that?”

“Frederick,” Alana scolded weakly.

“What did he say?” Hannibal asked, hooked.

“Is there a time limit to these appointments, or am I just here until you’re satisfied?” Frederick admitted, laughing along as Hannibal started to chuckle. “He’s a tough cookie.”

“Indeed,” Hannibal gushed, eye’s going distant.

“I’d go so far as to say he’s enchanting,” Frederick teased. He felt his stomach lurch when Hannibal’s eyes clicked over to his face. Hold on, he told himself. Just hold onto the line, you’ve got this.

“What exactly are we talking about here?” Alana asked.

“He’s the boy with the magic imagination,” Frederick elaborated. “Each night he recalls his battles with the Ripper, his particular insights. The whole cell block listens on, but Dr. Abel Gideon, our own family annihilator, is the only one who talks back. Your Will is the pied piper of my facility, and I’m worried he’s going to lead them astray.”

“That’s all a fine story,” Alana said, “but the truth is, Will is traumatized. He may just be ingratiating himself to anyone who will allow it.”

“Oh, he’s ingratiating, you can say that again. He’s *ingratiated* himself with one of my nurses. If I find further signs of fraternization, I may need to bring it to the board,” Frederick announced, laughing a bit too loudly. He took a deep breath and looked between his dinner mates.

“You will transfer her?” Hannibal asked, eyes going blank in a frightening way, lips spread wide to show canines.

“Him,” Frederick corrected. “I might have to transfer him.” Hannibal seemed barely to breathe. “Which is too bad, because the other nurses love him. He works out, so he always offers to unpack the pallets. I hear he can get quite sweaty.”

Hannibal took in a shaky breath and looked to Alana, who’s eyes were wide open in embarrassment.

“Perhaps our good Will is finally having an awakening,” Hannibal replied, a smile settling onto his face. “His very own Rumspringa.”

“He’s in jail, not summer camp,” Alana reminded them.

“And in jail he’s telling convicted killers that you’re like them,” Frederick challenged, unsure where he was getting the courage.

“He’s projecting,” Alana said, exasperated.

“He’s been through a lot,” Hannibal insisted, unflinching. “Let’s get ready for dessert, shall we?”

All three of them nodded and Hannibal left the room.

“Rude, Frederick!” Alana hissed, glaring at him. “Can’t you see the man is grieving?”

Frederick just shook his head. “He’s a grown man, he can handle the truth. You keep saying you’re not Will’s psychiatrist, but all you’ve been doing all night is psychoanalysis. We get it, Alana, you’re hoping for the best. Just don’t complain to me when you let it bite you.”

Alana sank back into her chair as Hannibal came in and they moved plates around to pass out huge slices of chocolate cake surrounded by stewed berries and whipped cream. It was a nice distraction, and Frederick was happy to let things simmer, so they ate in peace.

Chapter End Notes

Alana: Will’s crazy
Frederick: He’s crazy hot
Alana: He’s blown it all out of proportion.
Frederick: He’s blown out my nurse’s back.
Alana: Will is in a fragile position
Frederick: it’s called double penetration, I think.
Hannibal: 😕😕😕

Dream a Little Dream

Chapter Summary

Hannibal lets Frederick stick around the clean up, and then has a rough night.

Chapter Notes

Y'all ever had a sexy nightmare?!😵💫😵💫😵💫💋💋💋

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal couldn't help but let Frederick stay behind to help him clean up. He wanted to get more information from him about Will and this *nurse.* He pushed the want down and said goodnight to Alana, not giving up the position of perfect host for anything. When the door was closed and Hannibal was alone in the foyer he removed his tie carefully, rolling it and setting it on the entry bench. He removed his dinner jacket as well and hung it in the closet, ready for the drycleaners, then looked at himself in the mirror. Shoulders back, face blank.

Only a suggestion of a man.

He admired himself briefly, then made his way back to the kitchen, rolling his sleeves up. He filled the sink with hot water on the left, and pushed the faucet over so Frederick could rinse and set to dry. As Frederick came close he started cleaning the first plate, dunking it in the hot water. It felt mechanical, like he was acting out this physical thing while his consciousness was floating in the air above him.

"I don't really enjoy being the bearer of bad news," Frederick said as he waited for the handoff. "I just want you to know that *I know* how intoxicating Will is. I don't blame you for falling for his coy little games."

Hannibal felt anger rising in him, felt his shoulders pull back and his adrenal system sent danger signals through him. He breathed through it, experiencing the long minutes of crushing silence like sandpaper on his skin. He felt naked in just his shirt and slacks. "You sound attached," he finally noted, passing the plate over.

"Oh," Frederick chuckled, shaking his head as he turned off on the faucet, rinsing the plate quickly before picking up a hand towel, "I'm not in that demographic. He wants nothing to do with me."

Hannibal relaxed a bit and they fell into an easy rhythm, hands brushing and shoulders close. He waited for Frederick to go on, knowing he would naturally divulge what he was fighting with if left in silence long enough. Insight was a matter of patience.

“Which is ironic, since I *have* been the only one following him since he was a new hire to the FBI. All that work following his career, watching him defy categorization. Empathy disorder? That’s not in the DSM 5, Hannibal,” Frederick continued. “And he won’t allow anyone a look under the hood.”

“I believe Will is working through what is trauma and what is disorder, as quite a few of us have to,” Hannibal replied. “Not to mention illness. Has the fever subsided?”

“That’s old business really,” Frederick assured him. “He only had to take some pills for the first week or so after his hospital stay. He got bags and bags of antibiotics when he was at the hospital. He came to us a *pin cushion.* You really didn’t see any symptoms?”

Hannibal sighed, doling out a bit more honesty. “Of course I did. I even offered to get him in with an old friend of mine in neurology. I can only advise, it is up to us all to take our own actions.” He was getting tired of this line of questioning.

“He did seem quite heartbroken in the beginning of his stay,” Frederick offered. “These men don’t usually cry that much, well, in the daytime. He’s an outlier on many accounts.”

“He is extraordinary,” Hannibal admitted, his affection choking him. “You know, I was interested in him academically in the beginning.”

“Only in the beginning?” Frederick asked, stacking the dry dishes. He worked quickly and Hannibal wondered who it was in his life that taught him. Familial, surely, not restaurant trained. He felt himself disassociate, feeling the gummy pull of it. He decided then and there to continue telling the truth. He didn't care anymore.

“I very quickly became more interested in his company. He has a unique perspective, he’s comedic at times,” Hannibal explained, unable to keep the affection out of his voice. “The way his personality and perfected campus persona fight against each other. He’s elemental.” He was rambling now, and he didn’t know how to stop. “He loves viciously, as do I.”

“That’s a much more eloquent way of saying coy games, I’ll admit,” Frederick replied warmly.

Hannibal remembered Frederick after his divorce, pale and drawn. He didn’t want to think of himself in the same arena as that husk of a man. They finished the cleanup without another word, and soon enough Frederick was gone and Hannibal was standing alone in his kitchen, wringing his hands.

The treadmill was there for him and he fumbled with his phone in his pocket and put on Vivaldi, the Four Seasons, through the house's speakers and made it up to a run. A plan was beginning to form in his mind, a way to punish Chilton for seeing under 'Will’s hood' and move suspicion onto him as well. The only downside was that he’d have to use the one wild card up his sleeve. Was getting Will back worth all that, he wondered, if he was still angry?

His legs stopped being so tight and the feeling of his body settling into the run was enough to finally soothe him.

He ran for an hour, until he couldn't think of stopping, and then cooled off for a few minutes at a brisk walk. Concerto for Strings in G Major started up and the violin cleansed him as he flossed and brushed his teeth then showered quickly. He felt like a new man as he settled, dried and dressed, into his bed. He let his eyes close as the music changed to the sounds of waves to lure him to sleep.

Just as he was drifting he felt a presence at the end of the bed, next to his foot. He blinked his eyes open and saw Will's silhouette, moving as he breathed slowly. He was just a black blot in Hannibal's vision as his eyes tried to focus on the dark.

"You aren't really here," he murmured, his voice rough.

"Then you don't have anything to worry about," this Will said. "Go to sleep. *Go to sleep."*

Hannibal took to it like a command and soon found himself groggily waking from a black nothingness to the dip in the bed as he felt someone slipping in behind him. He breathed deeply, smelling Will, his terrible aftershave over his natural scent, the warmth of his body pressing against his back. Will's arms wrapped around his waist, tight, wiry arms, those delicate hands, covered in small scars. Hannibal sighed as Will tightened his fists in patches of chest hair through his pajama shirt.

"Shh," The apparition murmured.

"Will?" Hannibal asked, closing his eyes as he felt lips press against his neck.

"I missed you," this Will whispered. "Why did you send me away?"

Hannibal's stomach clenched, emotion roiling in him. "You were trying to end me," he replied. "I had to protect myself."

Distantly he knew it was a dream, but the heat at his back felt so real. He wanted it to go on forever. The press of Will's hard cock against him sent fire up his spine.

"I missed you, too," he whispered, threading his fingers into this Will's where they rested on his chest.

The apparition pressed his lips to the back of Hannibal's neck, nosing around his hairline and pressing burning kisses to his skin. Hannibal let out a long sigh and pressed himself back against the burning heat of this dream Will's erection, losing himself in the memory of Will's body against his. It felt so real, so right.

In the blink of an eye he was naked, and so was his spector. It felt too good to question the time jump, and he gave up trying to think at all when he felt one of Will's fists let go of the chest hair and take up his cock. It was a little too tight to feel good, and it stole the breath from his chest.

"I need you," Hannibal wheezed, hearing his voice multiply and crash around him as the dream took on a strange quality.

“Hannibal, I think there’s someone here. I need you...snk…Hannibal? Hannibal, I think-“ the apparition said, mouth open next to Hannibal's ear.

God, it was *the voicemail.* Hannibal bucked, *revolted,* attempted to claw himself free.

“Hannibal, I think there’s someone here. I need you...snk…Hannibal? Hannibal, I think-“ it repeated, arms up in defense, hands covering its head and face. “Hannibal, I think there’s someone here. I need you...snk…Hannibal? Hannibal, I think-“

His alarm saved him from seeing the thing's face under those hands, and he sat up in bed, pushing the covers down and breathing roughly. He felt his chest, no pain, he was still dressed in his pajamas. The only thing that followed him out of the dream was his body's reactions. He was hard, but that was waning. He clapped his hand on the alarm clock to stop the buzzing and stood from the bed on shaky legs. It was 4:00 a.m., he thought, he might as well get up.

In the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, the lights were still off in the cells for the night. There was no reason for Will to be awake, except that he was. He didn't know what time it was, as they weren't allowed watches or clocks, and he honestly wasn't sure if he'd been awake for a minute or for an hour.

There was a tick, tick, coming from the walls, but it was irregular. There was no way to center himself, and all he could think, and God would surely forgive him this, was that maybe Hannibal was awake. Maybe he was getting out of bed and heading to the kitchen for coffee. He had this sense that they were both awake, both willing to start their day. It felt more real than some of his premonitions.

He closed his eyes again and tried to go back to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal: I’m fine. I’m fine.

Hannibal’s subconscious: I’m about to fuck you up, kid👹👺👹👺👹👺👹👺👹

Home

Chapter Summary

Hannibal attends his own crime scene and then makes a good meal.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jack Crawford called Hannibal into the crime scene the next morning at six, which left him two hours to pull himself out of that damned dream. Showing up at another of his crime scenes, but this time without Will by his side, was a painful prospect as far as he was concerned. He would just have to give the acting job of the century and walk out of there in the end. It could be an opportunity to see if Jack suspected him more or less than before.

The poor maid was sitting to the side on a wooden bench, being consoled by another young woman. There was an orange caution blanket pulled over their shoulders and a medic knelt and took the maid's blood pressure. She was still shivering. Hannibal nodded to them solemnly as he passed and the maid started crying again.

Inside the motel room, buzzing around like bees, were Beverly Katz, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price, and Jack Crawford. The whole gang, Hannibal thought, his heart calling out Will's name.

"Dr Lecter," Jack said in recognition, looking up from his laptop. He was perched on the only seat in the room, resting the computer on his thigh. Everyone else looked up when he spoke.

Hannibal got a lukewarm reception, but took care in pulling on gloves and playing the part. It didn't matter, he didn't care about these people. He found himself caring less and less about Jack. "What do we have here?" he asked brightly.

"Elliot Budish himself," Jimmy replied. "We're trying to rule out whether he could have done this to himself. I don't think anyone has enough upper body control to cut off their own legs at the thigh."

"He wasn't in his right mind," Zeller countered. "Maybe the brain tumor turned off the pain receptors."

"He still would have lost too much blood," Beverly interjected. "I mean, where's the blood? It's nearly neurotic, how clean it is. There's no way he could cut off his own legs and then clean up."

Jimmy raised his hand to her, letting her know it was a good point.

“No,” Hannibal agreed, looking over the praying body, back flayed and suspended as perfect wings from the ceiling. “Whoever did this to Mr. Budish was putting him into his own painting, perhaps they even thought they were elevating his art.”

"He knew about the murders, then," Jack said, eyes on the computer.

“What do ya think the maid thought when she walked in here?” Zeller asked softly, looking a bit gray.

“Probably noticed he was naked first,” Beverly said, taking closeup photos of the pill bottles and wallet lying on the end of the bed in front of Budish. “I would have. I mean, my reaction was mostly: naked, dead, gross.”

“You think she’d notice his ass before the fact that he’s got no legs?” Jimmy asked.

“He might as well be kneeling,” Beverly replied. “What do you think the significance is? Cutting him off at the knee, but it’s at the thigh? Taking away his ability to get on his knees before God? Is it shaming him?”

Hannibal felt a slippery delight at his motives being kept secret. The truth was that Budish was very ill, and the disease and the treatment both lay wreckage to his organs. The only meat on him close to fit to be served was the thigh.

“He wanted us to know who he was,” Jimmy said, leaning in to pick up the wallet and let it hang open, Budish's driver's license stared out at them.

“I think he had a friend,” Jack said, eyeing Hannibal carefully as he continued to type. “Whoever this new copycat killer is, we’ll find him.”

Hannibal nodded to him and continued around the bed. He wouldn’t shrink away, and there was still plenty of work to do.

The crime scene only kept Hannibal busy until noon. After that he was hungry and tired, and just wanted to eat and take a nap. Soon enough he found himself over a steaming pan with a spoon in one hand and a can of crushed tomatoes in the other.

"The crushed tomatoes are important," he explained to his audience. "If you get tomato sauce, it's too runny. Fresh tomatoes work as well, but canned is more reliable."

He continued on, pulling fresh herbs from his shopping bag and placing them on the cutting board. "Fresh is best for the herbs. The dried ones just disintegrate. We want to be able to taste the full flavor, so we chop, chop, chop and toss into the pan."

The next ingredient was garlic, and Hannibal took his time breaking up the bulb and getting the pieces free and clean, then minced a handful. "Mince the garlic and add it to the pan," he said, "and always wash your fresh spinach. It's usually grown in sandy soil."

His audience watched carefully as he pulled the spinach from the bag and rinsed it thoroughly in the sink. Back on the cutting board, he removed the dried ends with a decisive chop, and

laid the spinach in the pan. They splayed out beautifully on top of the tomatoes and herbs as the sauce bubbled.

"The spinach goes in and we cover it and let it simmer for five minutes. Once the spinach is cooked we'll add our eggs. Three for two people is a good serving," he explained. "This is one of my favorite meals to make when I don't feel like making anything. The smell of the herbs and olive oil get you hungry in no time, I know I am. With as much garlic as I added, it might kill you, though."

Applesauce, Alana's new dog, spun where she was sitting in the entry to the kitchen, then sat again in her place next to Winston. Hannibal smiled at them and took some cooked chicken scraps and handed them out to the two.

"Your mother will be here soon, Ms. Applesauce, as I texted her before we began, and you'll have to explain your bad behavior to her," he said fondly, kneeling to scratch behind the dog's ear. "Although it's surely your fault she's here, isn't it Winston? You're a heartbreaker just like your dad."

Just as Hannibal said it he heard the crunch of tires on the driveway gravel. He stood and walked to the front door just as Alana's car came to a stop. He let the dogs out to run around the car and greet her when she emerged and went back into the kitchen to keep an eye on lunch.

He hadn't really wanted to see anyone today, but the dogs showed up and that meant Alana would be by whether he let her know or not. This way, at least, he could seem like the good Samaritan.

"Here you are," Alana said, walking into the kitchen with the dogs in tow, out of breath. "I can't believe these two."

"Winston can be very persuasive," Hannibal said with a smile. "Are you hungry? I made eggs in purgatory."

Alana watched as he opened the pan and stirred things around. She walked to the other side of the kitchen island and took a seat on one of the benches. He looked up when she didn't respond, holding an egg aloft.

"Why are you here?" she asked softly. "Sorry, I tried to think of a better way to put that on the ride over. Guess I was too worried about the dogs."

Hannibal nodded and broke the first egg, pouring it into the pan before grabbing another. "I'm doing a little bit of work on the house while Will is away," he said smoothly. "He'd planned to fix some of the roof tiles and replace the downstairs windows. The bathroom needs new pipes, as well."

Alana sighed and rested her head in her hands. "Does he know you're here?"

"He was going to repair the roof himself," Hannibal added without answering her, "but I have a few men coming tomorrow if it doesn't rain. The meteorologist on Channel Five says it's

going to remain dry for the next week."

"This is technically trespassing, Hannibal," Alana chided, looking up at him with a frown.

"I used my key," Hannibal said. It wasn't quite true, he'd used the key Will given him to watch the dogs. He knew the difference. "I'm only doing the upgrades Will had planned. I don't want him to come home to a leak."

"Are you sleeping here?" Alana asked, eyes shifting to the dogs. She was apparently starting to think of him as a danger.

"Of course not" Hannibal lied. "His mattress is twenty years old and the bedding might as well be potato sack cloth. I still have standards."

Alana seemed to relax at that and sat back in the chair. "It's sweet of you to take care of him, even when he's gone. I wish I had someone like you around when my Mom was dying."

Hannibal turned the stovetop off and set the pan on a trivet on the long counter and took a serving spoon from the dish rack. He filled each of two bowls, cracked fresh pepper on both, and then handed Alana a fork.

"Thank you," Alana said. "This looks amazing."

Hannibal smiled and they ate in silence, interrupted only by the hopeful gazes of the two dogs.

After Alana left Hannibal stalked up to the second floor and opened the last door down the hall. It was dark, and the lights crackled and snapped as they blinked to life, the sounds of the monitors beeping under it all were a metronome in Hannibal's mind.

The floors and walls were covered in clear plastic tarps, taped together at the edges to encase the whole bottom half of the room. A medical bed was placed under a newspaper covered window along the back wall, with fresh sheets and a gleaming IV pole ready for use on the left side. A heart monitor was up and running on the right, doing the little blip blip that meant no one was hooked up. The room felt clean and secure.

"Can't have dogs around for this one," Hannibal said to himself under his breath as he walked to the long table with all of his instruments. He picked up a fresh blade, still in the wrapper, and held it up to the light.

The room had two other windows, both taped up with newspapers so the only light would come from the fluorescent lamps he'd brought. As long as he kept the inevitable blood spray below waist high, the room would be easy as anything to clean up. It was hell getting all the equipment up the stairs, but it would all be worth it when he got his hands on Abel Gideon. He would take his time with the man who thought to befriend Will, get all the information he had to offer, piece by piece.

Abel was a worse man than him, he thought. He *may have* set up Will's downfall, but he would make up for it. Abel couldn't make anything up to a wife *in a grave.* He wondered

what she could have done to earn his wrath, if anything at all. That was weakness, and he needed to bleed out the man's weakness to cover up his own. He needed the brutality and he needed the company. Luckily, the neighbors were miles away.

Chapter End Notes

Alana: this is super creepy, why are you here?!?

Hannibal: I'm a handyman

Alana: are you sleeping here?

Hannibal, wearing one of Will's robes and a dirty pair of his socks: how could you say that?? Don't look upstairs by the way.

Courting

Chapter Summary

Will goes to court and Abel gets an offer he can't refuse.

Chapter Notes

Couldn't wait to sneak this one in! See y'all soon!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ironwood and river birch at the rocky edge of the stream were bustling with wildlife as was the switchgrass and skunkweed at the base of their trunks. Birds called back and forth, the oldest of the chicks just learning to fly and the youngest still screaming for mother. Even the air was alive, the sun waning in the sky and lighting up the backs of insects and motes of pollen pushed this way and that on the mellow breeze. The only alien noise on the stream was the snap, *snick* of Will's fishing rod as he cast it lazily through the air once again.

He was somehow his ideal self, hair cut short on the sides and left to grow a bit on top, beard perfectly trimmed, skin tan from months in the sun. He glowed from within, the calm sounds of his breathing and the even beating of his heart joining the sounds of the stream in his consciousness. He stuck the end of the fishing rod into the bed of the stream with a quick movement. The line held and he removed his jacket, folding the bulky thing and tossing the square of tan material onto the felled sycamore at the shore. He breathed deeper as he rolled the sleeves of his shirt up, sighing as the warmth of the sun fell on newly revealed skin. He pulled the rod back up and dusted the pebbles off the end of it, pulling a bit to sense the tension and seeing if anything bit.

Nothing yet, *nothing yet.*

What seemed like a million miles away, Will Graham's body sat still next to his lawyer, eyes hooded. Jack Crawford found himself on the stand.

"And when you first Met Will Graham at the christening of the Evil Mind's museum, what was your impression of the man?" the State's prosecutor, a tough woman named Marion Vega, asked. Jack shrugged a bit as she paced in front of him keeping the jury's attention where it needed to be, and off Will.

“When I first met Will we had a disagreement,” Jack recalled. “I thought he was arrogant, but highly intelligent and strikingly moral. He was very likely on the spectrum.”

Prosecutor Vega nodded and turned dramatically back to the courtroom crowd. “Will Graham was never a *real* FBI agent, was he? He wasn’t Agent Graham, he was Professor Graham. Would you say his *unusual mind* was why he didn’t pass the screening procedures?”

Jack shook his head, eyes going to Will. “The screening procedures check for instability, not autism. It weeds out those that may not be able to fully do the job.”

They all sat there for a moment as Vega just raised one perfect controlled eyebrow.

Jack swallowed hard, deciding how much to divulge. They’d gone over this. “We’re going up against killers everyday,” he continued, “and in the end an agent has to be willing to pull the trigger. Graham had been a police officer, and didn’t manage to do just that. If anything, he was almost too empathetic for the job. It’s hard to shoot the bad guy with a knife to your throat if you understand why they’re doing what they're doing.”

A few jurors were furiously scribbling on the little pads of paper they were provided, scratching away with ballpoint pens. Jack didn’t like being on a pedestal in this particular way. He couldn’t tell if the jury believed him, and he felt irritation walking up his spine.

“That was the past, this is now,” prosecutor Vega said. “Less than three months ago the defendant pulled the trigger several times, while pointing his service weapon at a woman half his size.”

“Objection!” Will’s lawyer said. “Is there a question in there, Prosecutor?”

Vega smiled at him and turned back to the jury after a look from the judge. “Was there a time when Will Graham pulled the trigger?”

The questions went on like that for a long while, and Jack found himself exhausted by the time he left the stand. He got a quick coffee in the back room after he was excused, stale from being in the pot all day but hot enough to melt the powdered creamer. He felt like he had defended Will as best he could, seeing as all the signs pointed towards him being guilty. He’d tried to show that the man he knew would understand the difference between killing a suspected murderer with a gun pointed at a kid and eating a man’s organs after displaying his mutilated corpse in public. *Exhausting.*

He finished his coffee and made his way down the labyrinth of beige halls and back to the entrance to the court. He showed his badge to the officer at the door and he entered the courtroom just in time to see none other than Hannibal Lecter taking the stand. Jack sat near the back of the room as Hannibal placed his hand on the Bible. It was shocking to see his usual paisley tie and checked suit ensemble in court. It looked garish against the solemn look of the judge’s and lawyer’s garb. He seemed a caricature of himself and for some reason Jack was sure he was finally looking at the man underneath the academic. *He was a Ringling Brother.* Jack felt sick.

“Dr. Lecter,” Vega began. “You were there in North Carolina when the defendant had his deadly encounter. Can you explain to the jury how it transpired?”

Hannibal nodded curtly and began. “I was working as a consultant for the FBI in tandem with a team assigned to contact the young boys who were being held by a middle aged woman. I had managed to open a line of communication with one of the boys who called from a payphone, unfortunately that was after two families had already been murdered.” Hannibal did something, looked some way at the jury that had their rapt attention, and he went on. “On the eve of the next expected home invasion, I asked Jack Crawford if we could fly Mr. Graham in. The local officer I was working with was a drunk, and I knew I needed someone who would do the right thing when it came down to it. As you probably know, we were seeing each other at that time, and you can imagine how much I appreciated him professionally. There was no one else I trusted to stand by my side that day.”

“The right thing?” Vega asked, clearly fumbling as she had expected a different answer. She looked back at her table and her colleague shook his head. “Did you not tell the FBI that you were worried Mr. Graham was too close with the Ripper?”

“I feared that Will was attempting to catch him on his own,” Hannibal said, drawing sighs and nods from the crowd. “He was tenacious, but going after the Ripper alone was against the rules. And you will remember he was suffering from an infection in his brain at the time.”

That drew a few shocked breaths and Jack ground his teeth. *What the actual fuck was going on?* Now that they had proceeded on Hannibal’s tips he was sitting there defending Will? He couldn’t understand the angle then Hannibal looked at Will for the first time and Jack held his head in his hands. Of course, *the man was still in love.*

Jack remembered a movie he’d watched in his twenties. It was a famous Chekoslovokian historical drama based off a book. He read the book too, but the movie was coming back to him and he couldn’t get the scene with the wolves out of his mind just then. (A pack of them, emerging from the snowy forest, hunger in their eyes.) One line stood out in his memory, his lips moving silently along with the words:

‘Ah, the signs of love - Who is so sophisticated as to tell the flush of anger from the blush of love. I see only the blood in their faces, only the blood, but by God, it is nothing to trifle with!’

Whatever this was, Jack decided, it wasn’t good.

The first Will heard of the interview was the day before it was to take place. Will had been gone most of the day in court and came back numb. Abel must have been up to something, because once Will was settled on his bed he realized he was. He asked the man and Abel explained that he got a little business opportunity, and not to be too upset with him.

“You’ve got a support system, I don’t,” Abel had explained. “Sorry, darling, I needed the cash.”

“But Freddie Lounds?” Will asked, annoyed. He didn’t point out that Abel had very much murdered his own support system. Abel wasn’t really built for introspection. That was when it occurred to him. “She’s going to ask about me, isn’t she?”

“Of course she is,” Abel said cheerfully. “My crimes are old news to these people. Two years, God, it’s been two years hasn’t it?”

Will was drifting off in his mind, putting together a best and worst case scenario for the outcome of the interview. It was possible that it would be good, wasn’t it? To get the word out about Hannibal, it could save some patient of his, or maybe his next victim. He wanted to believe it would turn out fine, but he had a sinking feeling in his stomach, and it was growing.

“Hey Abel?” he asked.

“Mmghm,” Abel grunted.

“Where are they doing the interview?” Will pressed.

“Oh, they’re doing it up big time. They rented out the dining hall and set up a stage on it. Lights, cameras, you know the rest,” Abel answered, sighing deeply as he was apparently reclining after his big negotiations.

“That’s all the way across the complex. How are you getting there?” Will asked, the knot in his stomach tightening.

“Trussed up like a Christmas goose and carted away, I’m sure,” Abel replied. “I won’t even leave the building, if that makes you feel better.”

“How much have you talked to Chilton, Abel? How much have you told him about our conversations?” Will asked, growing more distressed.

There was a squeak as Abel’s weight shifted on the bed and his voice came from a bit closer. “The whole place is wired,” he answered slowly, “you know that. Doesn’t matter what I tell him, he hears it *all.* Well, all but the elevator and the showers. If you’re worried about-“

“I’m worried about you going missing,” Will interrupted. “He’s out there, Abel. He won’t like you getting close to me.”

“Kid, listen to me. I’m not leaving the building. Don’t freak out over this,” Abel said.

Will rolled his eyes and frowned, shaking his head. Abel didn’t see, he thought Will’s story was at an end, he thought this was the ultimate downfall. The truth was, it was only a blip on the radar, Will was sure of it. Hannibal was far from done with him, and the knowledge of that was in equal measure frightening and comforting. At least he knew he would make it out; Hannibal had been as hungry as he’d ever seen him that day in court.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you,” Will sighed. “You aren’t careful, he’ll eat you right up.”

“I thought he wasn’t mad at you anymore. Heard he was a real sweetheart in court,” Abel replied casually. “I think he misses you.”

“Pride goeth before destruction,” Will mumbled. “I’m going to bed.”

Abel said a few more things, but Will was already gone, his consciousness back on the river as he curled up with one arm over his face to block out the light. The sun, that sun from years ago, summers ago, warmed his skin again.

Chapter End Notes

The prosecutor: doesn’t it look like Will is the baddie? 🔪💅💅💅

Jack: He’s only smart 🤥🤥🤥🤓🤓🤓

Hannibal: He’s only hot 🤥🤥🤥😎😎😎

The prosecutor: He’s ruining my life 😩😩😩😩😩

The Interview

Chapter Summary

We see Hannibal behind the scenes and join Abel during his interview with Freddie Lounds and the aftermath.

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for the birthday well wishes, here we go!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Early the next morning there was scratching at Will's front door. Hannibal woke to the sound and climbed from the warmth of Will's bed to inspect it. He grabbed his robe and slipped it on, then unlocked the door and opened it slowly. He was expecting Winston and Applesauce. Instead, on the other side of the screen door was a rat of a dog. The slim thing was about the size of a coyote but built like a greyhound.

Whippet, his mind supplied.

He took a step back and looked over the dog. Its gray fur was dirty, its nails were long and making rhythmic tapping sounds on the wooden porch floor. This was what was referred to as an outside dog. Hannibal understood the term to be derogatory. Not one of Alana's, then, he thought.

It was freezing outside so he opened the screen door, curious what the dog would do. It seemed familiar with the place, so it was possible it belonged to a neighbor. Sure enough, with its way unimpeded, the dog shot inside and went to sniff around the bed and around the pile of freshly laundered dog beds in the corner. Hannibal closed the door and busied himself with putting another log on the dying fire as the dog made its way around the living room. As he was closing the fireplace doors and standing, the dog rubbed up against his leg and leaned on him, wiggling away.

"No collar," Hannibal said to it, patting its shivering head. "Bad business, as now I don't know your name. I suppose I'll call you Dog."

Hannibal looked at his watch, it was close to five-ten, too early to call Alana and ask her what she thought to do. Still, 5AM was sleeping in for him, so he wouldn't be able to go back to sleep. With the sudden addition of hard manual labor to his life, in light of the fact that he was getting Will home soon, he was sleeping longer than usual. His shoulder still felt stiff

after finishing the insulation in the attic the night before. He'd done the roofing himself and found out as he was going that the whole section that needed replacement was added on after the house was finished. Unfortunately, it didn't have any insulation either. It had been a big job, but the house was holding heat a bit better already.

"You're here for the fire, aren't you?" he asked, walking to pick out a medium sized dog bed and lay it by the hearth. "Here you go, Dog."

The thing shivered and hopped into the bed, circling five times before laying down. Hannibal left it there and went to the closet to get out a bowl of dry dog food to keep the thing busy while he showered. He put the half-full bowl next to the dog bed and the dog sniffed and then started to eat. Hannibal was delighted to see he'd won the dog over, and smiled to himself, thinking how Will would be proud of him. Will surely knew this neighborhood dog, and Hannibal wanted it to stick around to prove to Will he was capable of caring for a dog without his guidance. He'd never had one of his own, but he had liked them from afar. He liked Will's dogs well enough. He decided he wouldn't call Alana after all.

"I'm going to shower now, Dog," he said, leaving the animal to eat and going to use the new tub he put in. He left the door open in case the dog got lonely, turned the lights on and stripped into the hamper in the corner, then finessed the shower faucet to a wonderfully hot spray and got in. The room filled with steam as he lathered himself and let his mind go back to memories of his Uncle and his two Doberman pinschers. They were focused, alert dogs, their fur always shining black with expensive oils. Hannibal had thought from a young age that the man loved those dogs much more than his wife.

He understood the draw of a dog; the type of animal that couldn't help but be the perfect companion. They kept secrets better than any man, and didn't look at you any different whether you were covered in snow, rain, or blood. His stepmother, the only other person he ever wanted to please besides himself when he was in young, had once summed up the complexities of the human and dog bond as such:

"Dog's keep promises that humans can't. Their love is genetic. Some men need that kind of ancestral submission."

Hannibal was pulled back to the present as shampoo started dripping in his eyes. He rinsed himself thoroughly and dried off with worn towels, tying one around his waist. Dog came into the room, twisting between his legs, as he wiped the steam off the mirror. It was a happy addition.

"You're an affectionate one, look, you're getting me dirty," Hannibal said, some of the dry earth from the dog's coat staining his legs. "Okay, bath for you now, shave later, come on."

Hannibal scooped the dog up in his arms and rearranged his day. The big day. He wondered absently if he could teach Dog to hunt for truffles.

*

Abel Gideon said his goodbyes and apologies to Will and followed Matthew down the hall in shackles and his white anti-bite mask through the gate and into the elevator. He was thinking about what Will had said about Hannibal getting him. He had to admit, if only to himself, that

he was intrigued by the cannibal. He wanted to meet this Ripper, and two years of utter boredom had him honing in on that want like nothing else mattered.

“You bringing me back from the interview, too, Mattie baby?” he asked as the elevator doors closed.

“Sadly, no, Dr. Gideon,” Matthew said warmly. “I have a date with a turkey sandwich and a bag of chips. I’m on lunch then. Why, you miss my company so much? Or do you need to use the library?”

“Your boy toy seems to think that I’m going to get snatched up by the Ripper,” Abel replied, enjoying the banter and the opportunity to stretch his legs.

“And he’s coming here?” Matthew asked.

“This is the only place I’ll be for the next twenty-five to life,” Abel answered playfully as the elevator doors opened.

They walked out together, turning left down a long hall, surrounded by nothing but the buzz of the overhead lighting and the sound of the keys on Matthew’s hip. Abel was shocked back to his body when Matthew started talking again.

“You don’t want Chilton to know,” Matthew murmured, getting his badge for the door from the nest of keys.

“Let’s say I’m eager for a change of scenery, shall we?” Abel asked jokingly.

“Can’t see much from six feet under,” Matthew replied.

They made it through the door to find the cart waiting for Abel to be clipped into. It looked like the kind of hand cart you would use to move boxes, Abel thought as he walked backwards into place and let himself be arranged. Once he was strapped in Matthew started wheeling him through the middle of the complex and a large and overgrown conservatory. It smelled of mildew and wet vegetation, the advent lingering in his nostrils. The sound of several pigeons and finches filled the air and Abel was wracked with longing for his old backyard. If he had understood he would lose his maple tree and rock garden he may not have killed his wife and her family. He really just got caught up in the power of it, of ending that incessant chatter.

“Six feet under is only the outcome for those who don’t understand the Ripper. I’ll probably just end up back here after all,” he answered calmly.

“What won’t you miss?” Matthew pressed. “You know he takes souvenirs.”

Abel huffed out a laugh. “I’ve got two kidneys, could spare some fingers, and I still have my appendix. I suppose he’ll want something tasty, though, if Mr. Graham is to be believed.”

“If Mr. Graham is to be believed,” Matthew agreed.

“I feel bad for this Miss Lounds myself. She’s putting herself square on the menu if you ask me,” Abel said as they made it through another long hall to the curving hallway around their destination.

“And she will ask you, I’m sure,” Matthew joked. “We’re here Dr. Gideon.”

“Thank you, dear,” Abel said quickly.

Matthew nodded and knocked once on the door leading to the back of the complex's dining hall. A tall man opened the door and they spoke quickly, Matthew signing a clipboard and nodding once more at Abel as he left. Abel closed his eyes as the orderly he recognized from the gym wheeled him into the space, and the warm lights of the stage. He could imagine it as the surgery theater, could imagine the sounds of the machines needed to keep a person alive.

He was wheeled to one side of a rectangular stage where he opened his eyes, a large plexiglass wall separating him from the other side of the stage where Freddie Lounds sat in a blood red suit, white shirt, her hair pinned up showing off that delicate neck. He could imagine breaking it and took in a steadying breath.

"Why, Miss Lounds, I'm going to have to be very clear with you, as you can't see my pretty smile," he gushed. "I think you're breathtaking in red."

Freddie smiled and picked up a pen and a pad of paper. "Thank you very much, Dr. Gideon. Now, shall we get started?" She asked.

Abel looked around the stage, wondering where the cameras were. All he could see were the two microphones hanging on opposite sides, the amp just at the top of the stairs, and a guy wearing big headphones who was glued to his laptop.

"Where is your camera, my dear?" he asked, panicking a bit that it might actually be a set-up after all.

"This is a podcast, Dr. Gideon. It's like talk radio on demand on the Internet," Freddie explained. "No video, just audio."

"They'll miss out on your divine suit," Abel impulsively spat.

"And your pretty smile," she teased. "We're both at a disadvantage."

Abel grinned and looked her over. She was feisty, he wondered how hard she would fight if he could get her alone. He felt arousal roll through him and licked his lips. "When do we start, gorgeous?" he asked, loving the way she sighed in annoyance at the pet name.

She glanced at the tech with the headphones and he held his hand up, then closed his fist and pointed to the stage.

"We start now," Freddie said, smiling back at him. "This is Freddie Lounds, from TattleCrime, and you're listening to Crime Chat. With me today I have Abel Gideon, former doctor and current criminal serving time in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane."

Abel's smile faltered and he settled in for a fight. Feisty.

"Welcome to the podcast, Abel Gideon," Freddie continued. "Do you know why I asked you here?"

"Thank you for having me, Miss Lounds," he allowed politely. "I assume you want to talk about my good friend, Will Graham."

"You would be correct," Freddie said, a funny little bell chiming through the room at the raise of her hand.

"As we saw yesterday," she went on, "the court case against possible Ripper conspirator, Will Graham, for the murder of Eldon Stammets has gone off the rails. All three of the witnesses for the prosecution claimed Graham may actually be innocent. For anyone just tuning in, today's witnesses were Jack Crawford, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, and FBI forensic analyst, Dr. Brian Zeller. Now we come to you, Mr. Gideon, what can you tell me of your impression of your cellmate, Will Graham?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but he's not my cellmate. He's more like my cell neighbor. They don't trust us Nasties together," Abel pointed out, hitting the tone she wanted. "But that's beside the point. Will is magnetic. Rough exterior, yes, and a quick tongue to match, but under all that…he's quite domesticated. Tame even."

"Domesticated?" Freddie asked. "So you think he's innocent?"

"I said what I said. If he killed that man it was provoked," Abel said, standing his ground.

"Okay," Freddie adjusted. "What does Will Graham think of his ex, Hannibal Lecter, and has it changed since his testimony?"

Abel grinned at her, he really enjoyed being the only one with the knowledge."Can't tell you that," he teased. "What I can tell you is that I assume it's easier to be in a thruple with a psychiatrist and a murderer, if the two are one and the same."

That perked her up. He loved how dogged she was.

"Are you suggesting Hannibal Lecter is a killer?" she asked, leaning in towards her microphone.

The rest of the interview was his, he knew it. "Oh, no, of course not. I'm just saying it would be convenient, don't you think?"

The interview went by fast after that, and Abel found himself saying goodbye to Freddie Lounds and getting her to promise she'd send him a paper readout of the interview for later perusal. He was waiting for his orderly to pick him up from the hall when a man wearing a baseball cap low on his head, his face totally obstructed, pulled a black bag over his head.

"Oh," he said in recognition, neurons shifting into action. "Well, fuck me."

The man, the Ripper, said nothing as he wheeled Abel out of the hallway and out the service exit, the cold of the afternoon biting into his skin let him know they were outside. The sound of van doors opening and a metal ramp being lowered, then he was moving again, uphill into complete darkness and the sound of the metal bed of a service van underfoot as he was propped up and tied against some wall loop surely meant to hold equipment.

"Secondary location," he mumbled to himself as he felt the prick of a needle and he found himself disappearing from view, in every way possible.

Chapter End Notes

Abel: I wanna meet the Ripper

The Ripper: dog. Dog. Dog dog. Kidnapping.

Abel: What did you say?!?

Information

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will both get information.

Will/Matthew chapter!!!

Chapter Notes

Poisoning. If this makes you want to hurt yourself you can wait for the next chapter, just know Hannibal is making Abel blind and Matthew gave Will a blow job!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal took the third entrance to Will's property. It had once looked like part of the landscape, but Hannibal had seen to that. The entire cleanup and disposal of branches and overgrowth cost nearly $2,000, but he could think of no other physical thing he could do to express his willingness to go into Will's depths and lead in the light. Bedelia had once told him that she suspected he lived through metaphors as a way to connect without the weight of explicit statements.

He thought he was too honest. That, in his experience, was what he was punished for socially. He used to share his gifts with the world, had let people know when they were ill, or in need of adjustment. Now, the only person that earned his honesty on a regular basis was Will. He thought he'd been clear in his letter, laid out all the reasons he had done what he did, and had promised to help Will. All he needed was some sign.

Court, and the fact that Will hadn't given him even a second of eye-contact, had pushed him to pause the next step in his plan to free him. He'd thought to kill Abel and leave him propped in the newly renovated living room, butchered, but now he just wanted to ask him some questions and send him back. Not unscathed, of course, but…

"Are we almost to your Baltimore home, Doctor Lecter?" Abel shouted from the back. The sedative must have worn off after the traffic at the end of their hour and a half long journey.

It was interesting that he knew who was taking him, though he was getting the location wrong. Hannibal wasn't ready to speak freely yet, felt it was only smart to wait until he had brushed him down for bugs. If he knew who was taking him, this could be a sting operation. If he gave anything away, he would be as good as a common criminal.

“Not talking, huh?” Abel shouted as they made it down the cracked pavement to the unpaved road that led to the back of Will’s house. “I bet you wished you’d given me more of whatever that was. Or taped up my mouth, for that matter.”

Hannibal smiled and laughed a bit to himself, those exact thoughts having gone through his mind just moments before. He didn’t have a problem liking his victims, as they were often hilarious in their last moments, and he'd expected no less from a famed surgeon. He saw the duality bright as day; this man was just a pathetic version of himself with less impulse control. He wanted to know how he charmed Will into divulging to him just as much as he wanted to know more about the Nurse. Abel just happened to be right in the middle of the spider’s web.

Struggle as you might, he thought.

It wasn’t personal. So he kept his mouth shut as Abel spoke, parking the van backwards. Once the van was off and he was ready to get Abel out he opened the back door for Dog and greeted him.

“He’s been in my things, so let’s mark him, hmm?” he whispered, leaning down to offer his hand to Dog, remembering what he’d learned about whippets on the Internet. Dog sniffed his hand and happily ran in circles. “Alright, go quick, Dog.”

Dog ran to the closest tree and peed in a long stream, his new red leather roll collar looking very nice against his grey fur. Hannibal admired him with a small smile and then led him inside and into his crate. He curled up on the little bed and Hannibal pulled his blanket over him.

“I’ll be down in a few hours, don’t worry about the screams. You’re doing a very good job being a dog, I must tell you,” Hannibal cooed, reaching to the top of the crate to pull down the sound proofing dog earmuffs. He loosened the Velcro and slipped it over Dog’s head, cinching it under his chin. He left Dog curled up and happy and made his way out to the van.

He opened the back of the van and didn’t listen as Abel went on and on about his own interests, climbing in and patting him down for wires. He opened the front of his jumpsuit and felt around.

“What, oh!” Abel exclaimed. “What are you looking for?”

Convinced, Hannibal snapped Abel’s jumpsuit back up and unlatched him from the wall of the van. He rolled him out of the van and left him at the back door to pull the van into a less conspicuous position behind the trees.

Abel was still talking as Hannibal walked back to the house and pulled him along. He shut up as he was yanked up the stairs, letting out little sounds of discomfort through the black bag over his head, and stayed quiet as he was brought into the temporary kill room. Hannibal wheeled him into the middle of the room and stepped on the wheel lock.

“Are we going to talk now?” Abel asked. “Or is it time for the knife? I hope I can sell you on some of my liver.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Hannibal said, stripping off his clothes at the door, “I’m afraid the whole liver must go. After we use it.”

He smiled to himself and brought the pile of clothes downstairs to the bathroom hamper, then pulled out a paper suit and box of gloves and washed his hands up to his elbows. He suited up, putting the two boxes back under the sink and pulled out a disposable mask. He jogged back up the stairs to the kill room. Abel was rambling again as he walked into the room as a surgeon. It was a pity he couldn’t see.

“Let’s talk,” He said, quieting Abel with his surety, “Doctor to Doctor.”

“Neither of us still practice,” Abel replied. “Although psychiatry is a close second. Tired of getting your hands in people’s guts, so you decided to trawl their psyche?”

“Almost exactly that,” Hannibal mused. “But you had better hope I haven’t forgotten my old trade.”

He walked back to the mini-fridge and pulled out a needle with a pre-drawn sedative. He turned back to Abel and explained his options to him.

“You are about to have a terrible accident, Dr. Gideon. If you want to talk, I suggest a stomach tube,” Hannibal said.

“Do I...do I get to know what the accident is?” Abel asked.

“I’m afraid it’s chemical. I’ll explain after I administer it. Tube, or no?” Hannibal asked, professional as ever.

“I’ll go with your suggestion,” Abel said, swallowing hard. “Doctor.”

The scent of fear was thick in the air as Hannibal turned back to his work table and greased up the tube. It was such a relief to really scare someone. He wondered if the man would piss himself now or later. He drew in a deep breath through his nose, making out just the touch of musk and perspiration, and pulled the black bag up to Abel’s nose.

“Head back, try to breathe slowly through your nose,” he said. He didn’t wait, pulling off the bite mask and pushing the tube down Abel's throat. He eased it in until it was in his stomach, soaking in the cries of pain eagerly. “Now for our accident,” he said, going back to pull up 10 cc's of the light blue fluid into the feeding syringe. He tipped the end of the syringe into the tube and emptied it, then followed up with a few 20 cc’s of water to flush the tube.

The tube came out easily and Hannibal walked it to the incineration bin in the corner as Abel coughed and gagged in the bag.

“You’re familiar with Methanol blindness,” Hannibal said, coming back to stand in front of Abel.

“Yes. Wait!” Abel gasped, gagging again.

“It takes a few hours to destroy the optic nerve. In that time it is going to completely ruin your liver,” Hannibal almost chided. “I have a donor piece of liver here, I’ll sew it in place if you survive, after I remove your liver. I would suggest talking now, if you are still intent on it, as you’ll soon be asking for the sedative.”

Abel coughed again and cleared his throat. “I know why you like him so much,” he spat. “As for killers, he’s fresh meat. Practically a virgin. Do you think that by changing him you’ll get him to stay? A happy little murder family?”

Hannibal sneered at him. “Will has urges, violent urges. I was only trying to encourage them where I could. To our mutual benefit.”

“That’s all there is to it? Is violence his only qualm? Besides betrayal, of course,” Abel pressed, moaning in discomfort.

Hannibal stepped closer, sighing at another clumsy attempt at couple’s therapy. “This isn’t interpersonal conflict, it’s refusal of the call. Tell me about the nurse."

"He's young and willing," Abel admitted. "He'll give you a run for your money."

Hannibal took in a tight breath and gritted his teeth.

"Why not kidnap him?" Abel asked. "Not like you couldn't find out all about him yourself."

"Will can make his own choices," Hannibal replied. "He'll come back eventually. Goodnight Abel."

Abel fought him as much as he could as he gave him the sedative, cursing the whole time, but Hannibal wasn't dissuaded, and in a few minutes he was slumped where he was strapped in. Hannibal moved him over to the surgical table and strapped him down then tilted it up so that he was less likely to choke on his own vomit and went about stabilizing him enough for him to live through this transformation.

That afternoon, in Baltimore, Will paced in his cell. Abel had been gone too long and he wanted information. He did his best to wait patiently, knowing that Matthew would come for him soon enough if the news was bad.

"Idiot," he mumbled, too irritated to go into his own mind to escape.

He'd tried to warn Abel, he'd done that, right? He was sure he'd told him he was in danger, but his panicked mind said it was obviously not enough.

"Not my problem," he hissed.

There was the sound of the gate down the hall opening and Will thanked everything holy that he heard Matthew approaching. Every loud step was one step closer to his cell, and he couldn't help but put his hands behind his back to prevent himself from sticking them out the opening prematurely.

"Mr. Graham," Matthew said at last, his voice a relief.

Will broke from his trance, putting his hands back through the opening fast enough to jam his knuckle.

"Don't hurt yourself," Matthew said, rubbing his hand out before cuffing him.

It was enough affection to make Will's anxious mind spin and he let his eyes close as Matthew explained a quick blood panel was needed and took him from his cell. He allowed himself to be walked down the hall, eyes on the ground to avoid his prison mates, and kept his mouth shut. The second they were in the elevator and the door was closed he spoke.

"Abel's gone, isn't he?" he asked softly.

"Off premises," Matthew agreed. "It's hush-hush for legal reasons. Chilton doesn't want to get sued over a kidnapping. Police are involved."

The elevator opened and they walked down the hall to the medical center. Will breathed deeply as they went into the usual room and the door was closed. Matthew smiled at him and gripped his left hand, massaging around the injured knuckle.

"Sorry about your pal," Matthew said softly. "Makes me think I should speed up my plans."

Will shrugged, a million things going through his mind. Matthew raised his linked hands to his lips and kissed each of his knuckles slowly.

"Do they actually want my blood, or is this a friendly visit?" Will asked, unable to push down a smile.

"Friendly," Matthew admitted. "And pre planned. I wanted to get your mind off seeing him in court."

"That'll be a feat," he huffed.

"Have to add on the Abel drama, too," Matthew allowed. "But I'm a hard worker."

"Yeah," Will asked. "Go ahead, then," he whispered fondly. "Just don't forget to kiss me on the lips."

Matthew leaned in and kissed him. It was hot and wet and perfect, and Will found arousal unfurling in his chest like a bud in Spring. He let Matthew hold his face, lick into his mouth, suck on his tongue. He tried to keep his moans to himself as he felt Matthew open his jumpsuit front and place a warm hand on his chest.

"May I?" Matthew murmured into Will's mouth.

"Fuck, yeah," Will said, out of breath.

Matthew pushed him up against the medical table and resumed kissing him as he pulled Will's cock out of his clothes and gave it a few easy pulls. Will was hard after a few minutes

of that and gasped for air as Matthew fell to his knees and took the head of his prick between his wet lips.

It was enough to have Will finally focusing on staying quiet and forgetting about the day. He started breathing through clenched teeth as Matthew let him into his mouth, sucking and bobbing his head.

Arousal rose in him until he had to close his eyes and let his head fall back in an effort not to thrust his hips. Matthew continued to give him a blissfully sloppy blow job and soon he was right on the edge of coming.

"It's good," he hissed, unable to stop himself. Matthew grunted and swallowed around the head of his cock and Will was coming hard, spilling into the man's mouth with months of pent up energy. He found himself giggling as Matthew pulled back, running his linked hands over that beautiful face, thumb finding the scar on his chin.

"That work enough for you, Boss?" Matthew teased, tipping his head forward so Will could run his hands through his hair.

"You're very good at what you do," Will replied. "I think you have a great future in cocksucking."

Matthew chuckled and wrapped his arms around Will's calves, breathing deeply and pressing his face close.

Matthew thought about that moment, the taste of Will's spend on his tongue and that beautiful laugh, as he waited for the bailiff that night. He needed Will out of jail and safe, and the only sure way to do that and have it be permanent would be to get a mistrial. The State was already regretting trying Will, and the death of the main bailiff and keeper of the evidence, in a manner usually known to the Ripper, was the perfect answer.

He knelt in the bailiff's living room and planned out their first week together on the outside. He would probably have to fill Will's fridge, as things would have gone bad, and he had a little daydream about going to Grocery Outlet with Will.

There was a shuffle, then keys in the lock. No time for daydreams, Matthew held his breath, and prepared for a fight.

Chapter End Notes

Good boyfriend: kills a bailiff so you get off

Bad boyfriend: steals your roommate for an interrogation

Awakening

Chapter Summary

Frederick meets with Abel at his return and Matthew and Will chat about extracurriculars.

No physical stuff this chapter between Will/Matthew

Chapter Notes

Been busy fostering a dog last minute, then another! Thanks for sticking around! Awooooooo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane had its own in-house emergency room. It was necessary to keep the dangerous criminals from faking their way to freedom. Who knew how to fake the throes of death other than the people who had seen it up close? Abel Gideon was dropped off by an EMT who was wearing a surgical mask and a full cover suit. The ER was ready for him, having been told he was coming back from liver surgery by an alert in the internal system. Abel was hooked up to fluids and oxygen to keep his body from rejecting the transplanted liver. Frederick Chilton was well aware that his obsession with keeping Abel's kidnapping quiet had caused the ease with which he was returned.

For the first time Frederick considered that he might be next, a sinking feeling seeming to pull him along through the halls to the hospital wing. He knew he was walking, but it felt like floating, as his body didn't really feel like it was connected to his thoughts.

HANNIBAL THE CANNIBAL
HANNIBAL THE CANNIBAL
HANNIBAL THE CANNIBAL

He couldn't push the phrase from his mind, it rattled around up there interrupting every attempted train of thought. Hannibal was the Ripper, he was sure of it now. He had to keep a brave face and talk to Abel about whatever he wanted to share, and once the day was done and he was home he would start putting together his go bag. It was Sunday, so the banks were closed, but in the morning he would take out enough to fill a duffle and get the hell out of dodge. Because- Hannibal the Cannibal

“Dr. Chilton,” a short brunette nurse greeted, holding out two boxes. “Gloves and a mask. We need to ensure he doesn’t reject the liver, so he’s on a regimen of immunosuppressant drugs. He’s awake, and he can talk, but he’s lost his eyesight and he’s under a small amount of sedation, so we don’t know if what he says will make sense.”

Chilton still didn’t know what the cause of this was besides a basic understanding of Methanol poisoning. He knew that later in the day Abel was going in for scans, and he figured they would find out what was going on under those perfectly placed stitches. He shivered, the sense of something crawling up his back at the memory of the photos his head nurse had shown him of the incision site, it had looked like a row of ants making their way across a pale abdomen.

The nurse showed him in and pulled a plastic chair up to let him sit right on the other side of a plastic sheet from Abel’s slack body. He nodded his thanks and sat down, swallowing hard and searching Abel’s face for any signs of consciousness. The room felt unbearably warm and loud, the sound of the heart monitor and some sort of air pump were joined by a constant hum of the air conditioning system, pumping in clean warm air and leaving no room in Frederick’s head to think.

“Why didn’t he take *you*, Frederick?” Abel asked, his voice rough, barely above a whisper. His eyes remained closed and he didn’t move a muscle outside of his mouth and left pinky finger. “I’ve been asking myself why he didn’t take you since he put me in the back of the transport van yesterday. Why me, and not you?”

“I’m terribly sorry this happened to you,” Frederick gasped in reply. He meant it, he could see himself in the same medical bed, injured the same way, in his mind. *Shit*, he needed to leave soon. “Is there anything you’d like to tell me about the incident?”

“Incident,” Abel complained. “It smelled like dogs.”

Frederick understood immediately.

“I didn’t hear any dogs, but it smelled like dogs. I had a bag over my head until he took my…” Abel took a long deep breath, wincing at the end of the intake. “I told him about Matthew. Said he was a younger, hotter version.”

There was no humor in Abel’s voice as he spoke and Frederick’s stomach soured further. “W-What did he say?”

“He scoffed at me, reminded me he was a surgeon, not a nurse,” Abel replied.

“Did he say anything about the bailiff?” Frederick asked, referencing the murder scene they found at the bailiff’s house that morning. It looked close to a Ripper murder.

“The what?” Abel asked.

Chilton paused. He knew it was a bad idea to share information about an open investigation with a criminal, but he also felt enough guilt to want to give in and bond a bit over their position in this ongoing circus.

“You didn’t hear this from me,” he said. “The bailiff in Will’s case was found killed on his own property. He was shot with the rifle and handgun from the case, the two cell phones in the case were sewn into his chest cavity.”

“Someone is trying to get the case thrown out,” Abel concluded.

“He was planted in his own back lawn, surrounded by flowering daffodils, arm poking out like the Mushroom man killer,” Frederick added. “Could be the Ripper.”

“Did it disrupt the court?” Abel asked.

“No. Although he delivered the man’s ear to the Judge in his chambers. He’s not happy, but not backing down.”

“Then it’s not him, it’s just a copycat, just some *lawn guy,*” Abel replied, sounding sure of himself. “But he has the spirit, and motive too I bet.”

Frederick saw then that he wasn’t on a firing line, he was in the eye of a tornado. His fingers tingled as he drew in a shaky breath.

God help him. *God help him.*

Will was sent back from court, shaking at the possibility of Hannibal’s interference. He was allowed to shower by a random staff member, and told he would have time in the gym after it. The shorts and t-shirt marked with the name of the prison were just like the many gym clothes Will had worn in school, down to the logo. He had a sense-memory of walking onto the basketball court at sixteen in the ‘wrong school’s’ shorts and shirt combo, the ridicule stung anew and he tried to focus on the here and now as he pulled them on. Dressed for the part, he was shackled and led to the sparse gym.

The relief he felt when he saw Matthew in his work whites, standing in the gym with his hands clasped behind his back, was outsized and ravenous. He had to actively work to hide his emotions, and it shocked him to realize he had been living as his true self, without the crutch of his glasses and without dampening his personality, for over a month now. Then there was the fact that what it took was to be accused of being a much worse man than he really was.

“Here you go,” the guard said to Matthew, allowing Will to walk the short distance between his two chaperones. “Beers after work?”

“You got it,” Matthew replied, giving the man a short salute.

“First one’s on you,” the guard teased.

“Story of my life,” Matthew said cheerfully in reply, leading Will further into the gym so the locked doors could be set into place. “See you later.”

The guard gave a quick wave back and walked back around the corner, leaving them alone.

“Did you turn off the video?” Will asked Matthew, giving him a small smile.

“Just took out the audio today. Suspicion is up,” Matthew explained, making his way around Will to release his cuffs. “We’re free to talk, though.”

“Well, that’s a fucking relief,” Will said, rubbing his wrists and walking to the treadmill. He stretched as quickly as he could and then got on the treadmill and pushed the go button. He had to immediately work off some of his energy. “You have an easier time making friends than I do," he said. He wasn't sure if he was feeling more admiration or jealousy, but it melted away as he made it from a quick walk to a jog.

"Acquaintances," Matthew replied, smiling as he stood still watching Will. "Don't have many friends. My extracurricular activities can't usually be shared."

"Nor mine," Will said, grinning, his heart rate rising to cardio. "Two sides of the same damn coin."

"How was court?" Matthew asked, his eyes looking up at him as he dipped his chin.

"Chaos," Will breathed out, hand reaching for a bottle of water. Matthew passed him one without a lid and Will winced at the warmth of the water. Still, he drank it down.

"Was it the Ripper?" Matthew pressed.

"I-" Will tried. He went through what he could gather from the pieces of the case he'd witnessed and what he'd found out after. "I mean, it smelled like the Ripper…"

"But you aren't sure?" Matthew asked.

"I haven't seen the crime scene, all I know is that he was shot and buried and missing an ear," Will admitted. "I don't know, though. Someone wants me out of prison."

"Is that true?"

Matthew's voice was so playful that Will had to look up. In that second he knew. He was trying to figure out what he had done to change Hannibal's mind, when Hannibal hadn't done the killing at all. His heart rate went through the roof and he bumped the treadmill into cool down mode and slowed to a quick walk.

"Alright there?" Matthew teased.

"You said you'd take care of my problems," Will said fondly, feeling a wave of warmth flow through him. He told the truth as well as he could. "I'm just amazed you followed through."

"It didn't work," Matthew said. "Taking him out might."

"You're nothing if not tenacious," Will said, grinning at him. "I'm pissed off that they can see us."

"Soon enough," Matthew replied, smiling softly at Will, even in the wake of his admission of guilt.

"I appreciate what you've done," Will said, getting his breath back and walking to the weight bench. He was sweaty, and grateful, and unafraid to show his admiration on his face. "Spot me?"

"Of course, Mr. Graham," Matthew said happily. "Anything you want."

Chapter End Notes

Chilton, the whole room around him worryingly catching fire: oh, this is BAD bad. 👀👀👀👀👀

Roots

Chapter Summary

Will and Matthew continue their talk and Will lets his mind run away from him.

Chapter Notes

Oh yeah! We are back babies! Thank you for waiting and enjoy!🤑🤑🤑🤑🤑🤑👹👹👹👹👹

The air between them in the gym was thick with arousal and the scent of sweat, and Matthew was *drunk* on it.

"Anything I want," Will parroted with a laugh. "That's a dangerous sentiment."

Matthew looked down at him as he gripped the dumbbells and started to do bicep curls. There was something magnetic between them that was *pulling* and he felt waves of pride crest and break over him as he saw Will process the fact that he had killed *for him.* For once in his life, a benefactor of his gifts was grinning and thankful at the reveal, not running away. Acceptance felt close enough to touch, and he had to linger a little bit, dig himself deeper into the warm fulfillment.

“What was your first time, the first time you tried to kill someone?” Will asked, tossing him from revelry directly into memories he’d rather forget.

“First time I tried?” Matthew repeated, steadying himself in the past and glancing around at his old summer camp in his mind. It was covered in dust and decay, when in truth it had been a place of beauty and light for several years before the incident. “There was a kid; he was getting picked on.” The child appeared in his mind, hair flaxen, eyes dwarfed behind coke-bottle glasses.

“At school?” Will asked, already paying more attention to one of his stories than any lover ever had.

“No,” Matthew said softly. “Camp. Sixth grade. This kid was in Second.” He smiled down at Will and spoke as plainly as he could, trying to ‘display honesty’, his therapist would say. “I tried to kill a camp counselor. He survived. It really came down to lack of planning on that one. I have trouble with impulsivity, but I’ve gotten much better over the years.”

“Clearly,” Will replied, finally meeting his eyes and grinning back, something easy and slow as a Summer afternoon. It pushed him to continue.

“I killed my middle school girlfriend’s dad the next year. He was a drunk, slapped her and her mom around,” he admitted, taking a deep breath. “The State sent me away. Said I was crazy for it.” On the next intake of breath he wet his lips and looked Will in the eyes. “Do you think that was the behavior of a crazy person, Mr. Graham? In your professional opinion, is fighting against those who wield power against the meek insane?”

The pull between them grew stronger and Matthew wondered for a second whether he would even care at the response. He wanted Will, wanted him to fold himself into his life the second he was released. He wanted more than he could even really vocalize, but he was sure Will felt something similarly amorphous and expanding.

“We live in a society that tells us it’s our place to protect ourselves, then passes judgment on how we manage to do it,” Will said, after a long pause.

“You don’t think I’m crazy?” Matthew asked, hating the fact that his tongue betrayed him on the last word and it came out muddled.

“For doing all the things I’ve always thought of doing?” Will asked, smiling and shaking his head. He set down the dumbbells and stood up, facing Matthew and looking him over carefully.

“I remove bullies,” Matthew allowed, shrugging slightly. “I’m going to take care of yours for you.”

With tenderness and utter adoration Will caught his eye and spoke. “He’s going to kill you.”

It felt like a love confession, like sacrament, like the ultimate challenge.

“He *will* try,” Matthew agreed, watching Will’s mouth and calculating how much time they had to talk before they needed to move to the next exercise. “I’m not worried.”

Will laughed, not unkindly, and walked to the rowing machine. Matthew followed him and watched him start in on the smooth movements.

“I forgot to ask you how you scored on the psychopath test, if they used it on you,” Will said between pants of breath.

“No you didn’t,” Matthew shot back playfully. “You didn’t want to ask.”

Will chuckled.

“You want to know if I’m confident because I’m good at what I do, or because I’m a narcissist with a God complex,” Matthew tried. He was pretty sure it was true, anyway.

“Yeah, okay,” Will said, smiling.

“If it makes you feel better,” Matthew replied, “I was good enough that even you thought mine might be the Ripper.”

Something passed over Will's face, but it was gone before Matthew could figure it out, some glimmer of something. His instinct was to let off the gas, take a step back.

"The flowers were wrong," Will said flatly, his eyes distant.

"Wrong?" Matthew asked, confused.

The clouds seemed to part and Will smiled at him again.

"Nothing," Will said. "Nothing for you to worry about."

Matthew nodded in response, but still felt slightly off-kilter as Will started the smooth pull of the rowing machine again. He had the feeling he was missing something important, but he wasn't sure what it was.

That night, under the single sheet in his cot, Will took a deep breath and plunged into the depths of the thought that had been haunting him all day; the flowers were wrong.

The Ripper, no, Hannibal... *Hannibal* didn’t use flowers for show or haphazardly. The idea that he would simply move flowers from nearby beds to adorn the body of a new kill was ridiculous. Hannibal did what he did to his victims because he saw them as lesser. They were both artistic medium *and* dinner, but they (and their plants) were never actually in the images Hannibal created.

Stammets was only an exception, presumably, because he brought the mushrooms with him, or led Hannibal to them. Will imagined the trunk of the man’s car filled with soil and mushrooms, waiting to be fed. He brought them, and himself to the butcher; he wasn’t being honored, it was just silly to let a good elm oyster go to waste. Will felt Hannibal’s perspective taking over, he thought he could see it for a moment in the almost-darkness of the cell moving under his skin.

Will closed his eyes just as he felt an unnatural fog boxing him in. As his eyes closed and he allowed his instincts to take over, a gold coin swung past his vision, in time with the sound of a metronome. He could almost hear the voice of his first and only psychiatrist whispering the magic words: Down you go, Will, down and down.

His eyes fluttered open in that new place, the fog dissipating as he looked in on the setting in front of him. The edge of a wooded area, dappled in light. He wasn't alone. He took a long breath and watched motes of dust caught in the morning sun as a mist rose and birds sang above. In front of him a large gash seemed cut in the landscape, bright red blooming in washes just at the edge of the wood.

Easter Red Columbine led the charge, but around the edges Will could see the rusty fronds of cinnamon and autumn ferns, the tall spadix of Jack-in-the-Pulpit and spikes of blood-red Coral Bells. The blooms of the Bleeding Heart plant bobbed and swayed in the morning

breeze and Will smelled rotting wood, running water, and the peculiar scent of the air before a storm, negative ions begging him to open his lungs to them.

He took in another deep breath and scanned the treeline; sure Hannibal was close. Soon enough he saw him. Dressed down in a zip-up sweater and slacks, Hannibal knelt on a dark green foam square, tending to his garden. His shoulder blades shifted under the wool as he dug a spade with a bright red handle into the earth.

"This time of year is best for thinning things out. Many of the plants have grown enough throughout the year to split, like so," Hannibal said, hand pulling back to bring the spade down hard, cleaving the bulbed plant in two.

Will took a few tentative steps forward, aware that he was slipping into the murky space between dream and imagination, projection and expectation. This version of Hannibal was just as likely to tell Will what he already knew as he was to add any insight.

"Look," Hannibal commanded, holding the single new plant aloft. It caught the morning light as his breath bloomed in front of him. The roots hung healthy and white, clutching to bits of earth. "Wait long enough and the separation is easy, painless."

"Is that what you're doing?" Will asked the specter. "Are you waiting long enough to toss me aside? Have I become a strain on the resources?"

Hannibal turned his head and Will took a step back. Instead of the usual warm brown, Hannibal's eyes were as black as the Fly man's, and just as unblinking.

"On the contrary," the thing replied smoothly, "I'm ensuring growth."

Will blinked and everything changed. He was packed in the earth, laid out on his back and covered in soil as if he'd been planted there all along, looking up at Hannibal's soil covered gloves. The small plant was lowered to Will's chest, the cavity somehow open and filled with soil.

"Space is necessary at times. I think I was taking all your sunshine," Hannibal replied, his pointer fingers and thumbs touching to create a ring, fingers splayed as he pressed the plant into Will, compacted the soil. "That's why you went *reaching out your roots,* isn't it?"

Will came to with a shock of a realization, unable yet to name it but feeling it's truth in his bones. He felt a wave of yearning, sickened by it, and pulled the sheet over his head as he got his breathing under control. He was sure, once again, that he was uselessly running from fate.

Judas

Chapter Summary

Hannibal finally meets Matthew!

Chapter Notes

Again, go here and check out this story too!

https://archiveofourown.org/works/37719436/chapters/94169035

Go read this in the meantime, give kudos and comments and love to this amazing author! Tell them lookupKate sent you!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The morning air that late day in February was freezing, the lawn in front of the apartment building glittering with frost. Matthew pulled on his running shoes and started out the front of the complex, jogging along with the tempo of the music being pumped through his earbuds. He tried to focus on the importance of the day ahead, even as he was lulled by the routine morning run.

This was the day he would prove his artistry to Will. Loyalty was already sworn with the murder of the bailiff, for which he still hadn't been questioned. The stakes at this point were higher, he wanted to prove he wasn't just some blunt tool, some uncultured muscle. His display of Hannibal as Judas would not only be beautiful, but would speak for itself.

He'd been thinking all month about how he would kill Hannibal. At first he had imagined it as some joint venture he and Will would undertake after he was out of prison, but after all the theatrics he really just wanted to get his hands around that bastard's neck. He couldn't see how he and Will were meant to move forward with Hannibal, the Ripper, in the way. The bear gun felt appropriate to the task, but not nearly theatrical enough to delight Will. He was learning with time what seemed to make Will preen, and he thought the setup he had been working on would just about do it. Adorn his homemade crucifix with the body of the beast, and he'd take Will's breath away.

He rounded the block, running past tall brick buildings to the concrete monstrosity he lived in. He jogged in place at the entrance as he let a family enter first, then he ran back up the

stairs to his place to shower. He needed to clean up, pack up, and make sure to get Will a strawberry milk before it all went down.

The forging of the gym membership was easy enough. More and more companies had switched to scanning a QR code obtained on their website instead of a driver's license. A few lines of code and Matthew let his phone do all the talking for him. He'd dropped off his duffle with the setup in the bushes out back the night before, so he entered with a shoulder bag filled with his swimsuit, towel, goggles, and tranq gun. The scent of chlorine told him the pool was close as he made it through to the changing rooms.

He found a locker and changed into his speedo and goggles. Then, bear gun tucked away in his towel, he did the first walk through of the pool. His heartbeat was louder than usual in his ears, but it was a steady rhythm. Everything was going to plan. The reservation system was simple to hack, so the pool area was eerily quiet besides the sloshing of water. It did nothing but racket up his confidence, and he drew in an even breath as Hannibal swam right up to the edge of the pool and turned in the water to push off for another lap. As soon as the meat of his shoulder was visible Matthew dropped the towel and shot the dart with practiced ease. It was difficult not to smile too widely as he watched Hannibal reach around and panic for a few moments before starting to go limp. (The Ripper was just another meat bag, in the end.)

Hannibal's body bobbed for a second as Matthew tucked the tranq gun in the back of his swimsuit and rolled the towel. He knelt and maneuvered Hannibal's limp form so the towel looped under his arms and around his back, then pulled him out as he stood, putting the weight on his knees and biceps. He'd expected the beast of a man to be heavy, so he'd been working himself up to a 300lbs leg press, and the effort was well worth it. It was invigorating to have his body doing what it did best, every muscle burning and warming as he dragged the body back to the janitor's closet.

"You just relax," he murmured, tapping through his phone to call the front desk before he left the building through the back exit.

The phone rang twice as he exited the building and the woman at the front desk answered just as he knelt to get his duffle. He pulled out his recorder, played the robotic-voiced bomb threat, and held his breath as the woman cried over the phone. He hoped she would follow the instructions to leave the building, but he had a plan to kill her if she caused a scene. He heard her speak into the building's PA system and the fire alarm was pulled as he asked and he pinched the skin of his inner wrist in that childhood instinct to check that you're awake when it all worked.

He gave it a few minutes, waiting in the back lot under the security camera he'd covered in silly string, then pressed the code into the back door and brought his kit into the main locker room. It was the third time he'd been in the building, and he was still struck giddy by how easily it would become a sort of pulpit for the Ripper's end. He quickly put the rig together against the dark grey marble background and stairs; Hannibal would stand on an upturned bucket, noose around his neck and arms held out and duct taped to a wooden rod, wrists cut. He tossed the noose over and ran back to pull the body through.

Hannibal was strung up in no time, but he would have to be awake to step onto the overturned bucket. Matthew pulled the syringe out of the freezer bag and popped off the cap, feeding the needle easily into a vein on Hannibal's outstretched arm. In no time at all he was twitching, groggy, coming to.

Matthew looked down at his watch, bomb squad still at least ten minutes out. "We have to do this quickly, Doctor."

Hannibal mumbled something as Matthew elbowed him into place, but his eyes were still fluttering with every breath. He choked and twisted at the feeling of the rope around his neck as it was pulled tighter and secured and his ankle twisted. It was almost over much too soon, but he righted himself and finally looked at his assailant.

Matthew grinned and held his arms out, mocking Hannibal's plight. "I believe your line is 'God, why didn't you make me good enough...so that you could have loved me?'."

Hannibal sputtered, snarled, and spoke, "God didn't make me."

Matthew laughed a bit, amused by his utter control over the cocky bastard. "I bet Judas had that feeling too, before his end. Hopefully you'll make it to repentance in the next five minutes."

"You're the nurse," Hannibal spat in recognition, now truly awake.

"You've heard of me," Matthew replied as he pulled a medical blade out of his bag and stood to slit Hannibal's wrists. "I've also heard of you. Don't struggle, or this will be over too soon."

Hannibal barely hissed at the pain, but his feet did stumble a bit on the bucket. "Are you intending to take my place?"

Matthew grinned and felt a surety that overwhelmed him momentarily, Hannibal's hot blood slick between his fingers, red, bright red and running in a gorgeous stream down the dark marble steps. He broke from it, wiped his hands off on his towel and tucked the knife away.

"As the Ripper, or in *his* bed?" Matthew asked, taking a step back to watch Hannibal struggle on the homemade cross. "I'm here because you hurt him. No, *no,* I understand. I killed a plant once by giving it too much fertilizer, it burned up the leaves from the inside out. I worry sometimes that love looks too much like violence to men like us."

A look came over Hannibal's face and he took the pain and draining blood with a new determination. "You're doing this for Will," he said, watching carefully. "Did he ask you to kill me?"

Matthew should have looked at his watch, should have been keeping an eye on the time, but Hannibal was smiling with his eyes as the fire alarm continued to blare, and he needed to understand why. "It was agreed upon."

“Tell me his exact words,” Hannibal asked, sweating and shaking and covered in blood, yet acting like he didn’t have a care in the world.

“This isn’t a sleepover, you’re losing blood,” Matthew noted, suddenly uncomfortable.

“Did he use my name?” Hannibal asked.

Matthew looked him in the eye, wanting to land one last blow. “Never.”

There was the sound of a door busting open behind them, but it was too soon. Matthew kicked out the bucket as Hannibal shouted to the intruder. The last words Matthew would ever hear seemed to play on repeat as the bullet passed through him and things went dark.

Over and over:

Jack, he’s got a gun!

Jack, he’s got a gun!

Jack, he’s got a gun!

Chapter End Notes

Matthew: I’m killing you.

Hannibal: because Will asked? Did he say pretty please?

Matthew: dude how are you bleeding out and also have a boner?

I’m Going to Fucking Tear You Apart

Chapter Summary

It’s the scene of a crime, babeyyy!

Chapter Notes

Comment Area Reminder: (go listen to Be Nice by Thees Handz
Song by Murs, The Grouch, and Thees Handz)

(Brad) I shine, you shine, come on!

(The Grouch) When I see you smile, I smile
When I see your light, I light
I wanna hear you laugh
I’ve been on this path a while
When I do what’s right, I’m right, God gave me that
So I’m grateful, I wanna thank you
My reflection, imma stay full
I wanna treat my brother like a brother
Even when he shows his vice

Motherfucka be nice
Play nice, that’s nice, we nice
Motherfucka be nice
Play nice, that’s nice, we nice

(Murs) You ever smile at motherfucka
And they don’t smile back and you like
‘Who the fucka-’
What’s wrong with you?
I took a deep breathe and wrote this song for you
I know you’re going through your struggle, scared to let anybody up inside your bubble
I buried a parent, I buried a kid, so when I say this, I’m speaking from experience
Whatever it is, it’s never that serious to have you walkin' around with your face all furious
You woke up today, and for a million motherfuckas it went the other way
Everyday is a chance to be reborn, there’s still Taco Bell and there’s free porn
There’s always something you can smile about, whatchu lookin' for a reason to start wildin' out?

I’m really sorry that you had a bad day, lookin' like somebody used your mouth as an ashtray
Cheer up Charlie, you Negative Nelly, I hope someone paint a rainbow on your belly, be nice

Motherfucka be nice
Play nice, that’s nice, we nice
Motherfucka be nice
Play nice, that’s nice, we nice

(Murs) When I see you smile, I smile
When I see your light, I light
I wanna hear you laugh
I been on this path a while
When I do what’s right, I’m right, God gave me that
So I’m grateful, I wanna thank you
My reflection, and imma stay full
I wanna treat my brother like a brother
Even when he shows his vice
Motherfucka be nice

(The Grouch) I had a bucket full of lemons had to paint ‘em gold
You learn your lessons on the daily when you gettin’ grown
Yellin' ‘Fuck it’, but my mother raised me to care, Oakland Cali yeah we gotta lot of pride there
Lotta love, lotta funk, lotta soul inside I wanna share what I got cause it’s cold at night
When he hungry and he homeless, it don’t feel fair. Come back 20 years and he still there
I gave a couple dollars, but I’m not rich, not in dollars homie though my spirit is
So we shoot to shit, shit shot, hit the booth with this, hip hop
Thoughts clearer now, you my mirror now, where the depth at? Trace my steps back

(Brad) Come on!
Yeah!
I can see you shinin'! Whoo!
I can see the light! Whoo!
I can see you glowin' on the inside
Yeah!
You can see mine
I shine, you shine, come on!

(The Grouch/Murs) When I see you smile, I smile
When I see your light, I light
I wanna hear you laugh
I been on this path a while
When I do what’s right, I’m right, God gave me that
So I’m grateful, I wanna thank you
My reflection, imma stay full

I wanna treat my brother like a brother
Even when he shows his vice
Motherfucka be nice
Play nice, that's nice, we nice
Motherfucka be nice
Play nice, that's nice, we nice

(Brad) I shine, you shine, come on!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hanging felt like drowning. The pain from his wrists and neck combined and choked him as eagerly as the noose. Jack hugged him around the waist and hefted his body up and he could *breathe* again. One burning gulp and he was gone. Blackness that felt like it was humming around him swallowed him up and he sank in it without much of anything you could call a thought for what felt like an eternity. The darkness ebbed and flowed around him, refusing to let up, and the tide was coming in.

On the other side of the veil a familiar dance was taking place; FBI agents and paramedics swarmed the room. Matthew was pulled from his crumpled place on the floor. Hannibal was placed on a stretcher and his wrists were seen to. Each step was practiced and executed thousands of times. The people moved like pieces on a board, taking their expected routes, avoiding or collecting the usual debris and contaminants. A life was lost, but one preserved, all in a matter of minutes.

In the eye of the storm Jack Crawford was a heroic force, (as he was always meant to be) directing the action around him, voice rumbling loud as thunder as Matthew's body was zipped into a bag and Hannibal was given oxygen and readied for transit.

"Move, people," Jack directed. "Who's going with Hannibal to the hospital?"

Beverly Katz raised her hand and Jack nodded once before the paramedics ran Hannibal's body out the back door. Jack looked away as Beverly ran by, gaze going back to the noose. Flashes went off around him, the Techs taking photos of the scene, and he was cast in that light larger than life, a vengeful angel. He would haunt the photos of the scene from the edges, Thinking Man turned *White Knight.*

The thought that ran round his head like a jackrabbit was that he *wouldn't lose anyone after Will.* He reminded himself that the court case wasn't quite over and that the reality of Hannibal's physical state meant he could ingratiate himself with the Ripper in his time of need, if that's what he was after all. He felt a piteous relief at the thought of being able to get a full night sleep *and* the necessary evidence. He had saved the man, he knew, and he had yet to decide if he would regret it.

Beverly let the paramedics leave with Hannibal's stretcher as she made sure she had everything she needed and took one last deep breath before leaving through the back exit. It was cold out and it was a good distraction from the fact that she didn't really know how she

felt. Or, she thought, whether she could feel yet at all. Shock was a helluva drug, and she was running on what felt like months of it.

She'd been suspecting Hannibal of a myriad of things, more and more as the case went on, but that ran into a wall with everyone and their mom throwing doubt into the case. Hannibal seemed so sincere when he talked about Will's place in his life, and here she was riding along to the hospital after a tip from an inmate led them to what seemed to be a classic, in function if not form, lovers quarrel turned deadly. *Jesus Christ,* what a mess.

The ambulance was parked right out back, lights spinning and exhaust pipe puffing clouds into the brisk afternoon air. Beverly caught up as the paramedics packed up to leave, giving them a flash of her badge. They nodded and she hopped in, giving the scene one last grim glance as the doors began to close and they pulled away. Two paramedics worked on stabilizing Hannibal's O2 levels, shouting jargon back and forth, as he lay there ,eyes closed.

Inside that dark place, Hannibal began to hear the notes of a song. The notes were the ones he'd written; a song, started months ago and never finished, Will's theme. At the crescendo he began to feel gravity take hold again and found himself sitting up in a hospital bed, that same darkness still surrounding it. No walls, no floor, *just black.*

Out of it, appearing like an oasis, Will Graham stepped confidently. He held up both hands in pacification, but the palms were bright red and dripping with blood. Still, he smiled and crossed his arms. He was dressed in one of Hannibal's favorite outfits of his, a grey sweater with dark grey slacks. The bright red was a shock to Hannibal's system, and he felt his stomach drop as he recalled what had happened, looking down at his own freshly cut wrists.

He fumbled briefly, his own hands slipping in hot blood as he tried to search the bed sheets for a strip of some material for a bandage. He paused when he realized he couldn't feel the pain anymore, even as the blood kept flowing. His left hand went to his neck, bruises warm under his fingers, but unresponsive to pressure. The fact that he was somehow disconnected from his senses had an eerie quality to it. It gripped him by his bruised throat.

"Where are we?" he asked, voice rough, tight. "Is this purgatory?"

"Hardly," *this* Will replied, a little too easily. It was unusually eager for such a contemplative man.

"Are you a figment of my imagination?" Hannibal guessed.

"Partially," Will allowed, tongue poking his cheek out as he watched Hannibal try to understand.

The next words came out a bit weak, but Hannibal kept his chin high. "Did you kill me?"

Will chuckled and moved closer to sit on the edge of the bed, with its bloody sheets. He looked deeply into Hannibal's eyes as he drew in a breath. All Hannibal could hear was his own excited heartbeat.

"Not yet, Darlin'," Will teased. "You'll be fine. Can't say the same for poor Mattie."

"Jack took the shot," Hannibal replied without thinking, an odd feeling overtaking him as he remembered he might be arguing with *himself.*

"You directed it," Will replied. Adding with false fear, "Jack, he's got a gun!"

"You can't know that," Hannibal fussed.

"No, but you can," Will smiled, bloody hands reaching out to grip Hannibal's, smearing blood between their fingers. "What role am I here to play for you, Doctor Lecter? Confidant? Companion? *Courtesan?"*

"Mirror," Hannibal volleyed.

"Maybe, Baby," Will quipped.

This flirting was a big self indulgent, he knew, but it felt so good. As Hannibal looked him over he felt less threatened, more aware of how long it has been since he'd touched Will. This version of Will preened under the intense scrutiny. Hannibal's fingers twitched.

"Are you the ghost of Christmas past?" he asked.

Will's lips twitched and he shrugged playfully, taking his hands back. "Oh, I can also be the ghost of Christmas yet to come, if you don't get off your ass."

"I have to get Will out," Hannibal concluded.

"Because…" Will lead, pulling the word out like taffy.

Hannibal could smell him now, the dreamlike quality clarifying, blood over his natural scent.

"Because, a murder attempt is as close to a consession as I'll get," Hannibal replied with a growing understanding, fingers of his right hand moving to brush against the apparition's forearm. "Because he deserves better than what I gave him."

"Bingo," Will said, letting his head tilt to the side as he veritably beamed. He then reached out and pressed two bloody fingertips to Hannibal's bottom lip. "Now open up. There you go."

Hannibal felt his mouth open, welcoming the fingers. He let his eyes flutter closed as he eagerly licked the blood from them. Under all of it, mouthwatering and familiar, was Will's skin. Hannibal couldn't help but reach out to grip Will's sweater in one hand, right over his heart.

"Okay, shh," Will murmured.

Hannibal breathed through his nose and allowed Will to add his pinky and ring finger to his mouth, thumb brushing back and forth under his chin.

"Gentle now, don't bite."

Hannibal tried to make a sound of agreement, but choked as he felt his jaw reach its limit as Will added his thumb. He focused on breathing, but his jaw gave him a shock as Will started pushing his hand down his throat. It didn't hurt, nothing did in this place, but his mind couldn't help but register it as wrong. *Panic,* fresh and hot, desperate and so very rare.

"Don't you dare bite," Will grunted, pushing even as Hannibal felt his throat stretching and tearing. "Little more now."

He leaned in and Hannibal felt his breath against his ear. The shock it sent through him almost made him forget he couldn't breathe anymore. Will licked his lips and made a promise with a whisper, then pushed his entire arm into Hannibal's body.

The words rattled around in whatever brain Hannibal figured he had left, less anxious thought and more meditative chant. It was fitting, and he was in love.

I'm going to fucking tear you apart.

Chapter End Notes

Will: gives him a black eye
Hannibal: is this commitment?

Will: tries to put Hannibal away
Hannibal: god forbid I'm not perfect, Will. God forbid I feel, and express, and CREATE ART! Is my passion not beauty, is man not indistinguishable from one another until elevated?

Will: sends the dude he's sleeping with to kill Hannibal
Hannibal's mind: oh my god he wanted to kill me! He not only wanted to kill me, but he convinced this strapping young man to do it for him! That means it was planned, that means he was THINKING thinking about me! 💇‍♂️👰‍♂️💁‍♂️💅💍🎂🥂🎻💸🏳️🌈👨❤️👨✈️🤳🏖️

Your Boyfriend's Back And There's Gonna Be Trouble

Chapter Summary

> Will has a startling revelation about motive in the Ripper case, and finds out he won't be tried for the murder attempt from an old pal.

Chapter Notes

> Alright guys, we are three chapters away from Will going home...who is as ready as me to see him take back his power???

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"This is why we can't have nice things."

It wasn't a phrase so much as what his grandma had called 'the soul of the family'. At the time Will had been too young to understand how easily that motto would slip under his skin and haunt him for the rest of his life. Always, there was this underlying feeling that things would go south when times got good. It might have turned malignant before Will had a chance, in his formative years.

Not that the last few years *hadn't* been formative, he thought with a sneer. The last *week* had been formative. He'd spent a week unable to stop the tears leaking out of his eyes at all times, causing him to go back to wearing his battered glasses again, eyes only settling when they were once more on the floor, shoulders hunched. He could *feel* the transformation in the tightness of his neck, the pain in his shoulder, the ever present sense that he might just wake up from it all like a bad dream.

But no, this is why we can't have nice things; because Will plays too rough with his things. "Isn't that right?" Will's dad would then ask, reeking of chum and tracking his own trail of mess onto the carpet.

"Yes, sir," Will whispered to himself.

He got out of bed early the day Abel was scheduled to return, taking the first chance he got to join him on an outing. Gym time on the track was the only real time he got with another inmate. They were allowed to walk around for a half hour, in pairs, no more than one pair at a time. Again the imposition of order pulled Will out of the worst of grief.

He didn't know whether he was moved to reconnect with Abel out of morbid curiosity, or this new jagged thing pulling inside himself that spoke Hannibal's name like an echo through his whole fucking being. Well, maybe he had some idea. Hannibal Lecter was alive, Abel was alive *for now* and in a wheelchair for the time being, and Matthew was dead. Will in turn felt like the walking dead; allowed one more glimpse of the beauty of the world before it was to be snuffed away.

There were certainly many different possible outcomes to being found out as the orchestrator of a murder attempt on your ex-lover, perpetrated by your current lover, and this was definitely a special case, but Will was feeling like he ruined his whole life again. If he had waited until he was out, if he'd bit his tongue and told Hannibal what he wanted to hear weeks ago, he would still have a chance to kill him. Now he'd rot away in prison, without the one person there who made it tolerable to be alive. He looked at the ground and tried to breathe through the panic.

There were wildflowers growing in the patchy crabgrass and displaced sand next to the outdoor track, yellow ones that looked like miniature cups, bright orange flowers that were purple near the stamen, clover, always clover. March mornings took his breath away, the promise of an ease to the bleakness of winter. He almost ran them off the track watching the weeds.

"Are you giving me the silent treatment?" Abel asked, tossing the question leisurely over his shoulder and pulling his lap blanket closer against the cold.

They were both dressed in gray sweats and matching hoodies, and the same gray Velcro sneakers. Will thought that if you saw them from far away, far enough away to miss the barbed wire fencing, the guards, and the name of the facility printed on their garments, you might think it was a father/son outing, and a sweet one at that. Will decided that if he was going with the theme he might as well play at *old friends.*

"I'm always surprised when I make it through another winter," he replied abstractly, correcting the wheelchair to the middle of the soggy track. "When I was young we lived in boatyards where my dad worked. Over the summer I could spend hours in the water with the dogs, we could dry in the sun. I'd finish chores and make dinner early, then I'd just escape with them into the wilderness. Over winter the dogs weren't allowed in the little apartments because we were always renting and they were always covered in mud."

"Spring has you contemplative," Abel noted. "Or is it death that's doing that?"

Will's stomach turned and he shook his head to chase any impending tears. Abel was smart, and it made him quick to psychoanalyze, he had to remind himself not to give in so easily. "Are you the one that tipped off the feds about my plan?"

"Why, yes. It's interesting they aren't expecting you to take your revenge," Abel quipped, adding quickly at the silence from Will, "I didn't rat you out, Darling, I just gave the poor boy away. Alana Bloom came to me asking about *him,* just like Freddie did. Can I help that I'm a gossip at heart?"

Alana. Will knew that someone had told Jack, but he didn't know who the messenger was. It made a strange bit of sense to him that it was her, and he wasn't sure he could blame her. She'd known Hannibal for years and had managed to stay in his orbit without any of the ill effects Will himself had suffered. Did that mean Hannibal liked her more than him, or less? It was irrelevant, though it didn't feel that way.

"You told Alana and she called Jack," Will spat. "You're very close to being on my *shit list,* Gideon."

"Last name, so formal," Abel replied. "I told her to *watch* Hannibal, you're the one who suggested the new hobby to the kid."

"It was a safety precaution, for when I get out," Will said with a sigh, he was exhausted. "I can't believe you didn't let it go through."

Abel shook his head. "He let me go, so I returned the favor."

"He didn't let you go," Will said sternly, "he marked you for death."

"At least *something* interesting is happening," Abel mused. "Maybe I stopped it because I-"

Will could tell Abel was still speaking, but he was having one of those moments where he was right on the edge, just about to have an epiphany. He felt a buzzing in his ears and recalled what had just come out of his mouth.

He didn't let you go, he marked you for death.

Christ, it was right there; some reality about how the Ripper chose his victims that was about to come clear. He didn't let you go. *He doesn't let people go.* It just *looks* like it.

This whole time he had thought that the Ripper choosing to make Eldon Stammets, a man who had directly wronged him, a victim was out of character. He thought that it was the only time Hannibal knew the victim before the crime, but that was wrong. The conductor was another one, and it was closer to the Ripper's usual kill; a tamer version of the Mushroom Man fiasco. The conductor was like a slow motion version of Eldon, and in that pacing Will could see Hannibal for what he really was, one with the Ripper: he was a man.

This whole time he had been thinking the Ripper struck at random, like a wild animal when something approaches its territory, but Hannibal Lecter was a *man* ruled by *schedule and propriety.* He probably had some kind of spreadsheet or Rolodex of his future victims.

Will looked from the outside like he was trying to remember a phone number of an old friend, eyes distant, up and to the right. His feet slowed to a stop. Inside he felt like the summer sun was washing over him, melting the ice holding him still, because he finally knew how he was going to catch Hannibal. The very human son-of-a-bitch had a shit list, too.

"Did you enjoy it when you thought he might be dead?" Abel's question cut through his thoughts.

"Yes," he answered honestly.

“You’re changing,” Abel observed.

“And you’re staying the same. You should have taken the chance to escape him with your life when you could have. He won’t thank you for interfering.”

Abel thought about that for a while, then hummed as if he’d come to a conclusion. “Will you take your own advice?”

“Don’t know if I can at this point. Our struggle feels in a strange way like home,” Will replied, working on a plan.

“Will you try to kill him again?” Abel asked in a casual manner only really cultivated by serial killers.

“No,” Will said. “I no longer believe even death will stop him.”

It was apparently a little too dry a delivery because Abel turned around in his chair to look up at him. His eyes didn’t see anything, but the impulse to turn to speak was still embedded.

“What is home,” Abel replied, “if not the first place we learn to run from?”

“You’ve got the spirit,” Will deadpanned, relaxing and starting up their walk again. “Now shut up so I can think.”

Abel snorted out a laugh and said something suspiciously close to ‘okay, princess’. Will laughed a bit with him and then disappeared back into his thoughts. No jail, he thought, and that possibly meant justice.

Chapter End Notes

Somebody better give this guy something nice soon or I’m gonna break something 👺👹👹👹👹👹👹

Black And Deeper Than The Ocean

Chapter Summary

A fast paced chapter to get us back into it. Will navigates moving parts to get to what he wants.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for hanging around!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The State's case against Will Graham was floundering, at best. He could have been summoning her because of that, Alana thought, stuck in traffic in her little black Benz on the way to the Baltimore State Hospital. She should have consulted with Jack about the evolution of the State prosecutor's aim, should have let him know she was going to meet Will Graham. *Will,* Jesus, she thought, observing her own mind trying to put some distance between them.

She didn't want to fall back under Will's spell, if she was being honest. He had this way of opening up his face to a person, this way of showing such honest, human vulnerability as to make the whole situation seem lewd. He undressed himself in the viewers eyes with one look, and he seemed to almost radiate safety, understanding, and woe; the blue eyed mountain man offering you shelter and some stew when you're lost in the woods. The problem, of course, was that you'd walked into those woods *to find him, he made those woods,* and he'd never leave them for you. Not the woods of Wolf Trap Virginia, not the woods of his own mind.

"Are you going to confess?" Abel asked, listening to Will carefully as he tried to get his hair under control, the sound of a paddle brush pushing through curls reminded him of his mother.

"Hardly," Will replied, leaning down to pull on his shoes, his little puffs of breath closer to Abel where he was laying back on his cot, then the sound of velcro.

"Then why Doctor Bloom? I told you she doesn't know anything," Abel pressed, turning his head in Will's direction. "She can't get you out."

"No, *she* can't," Will agreed with a touch more humor than usual. It set off alarm bells in Abel's mind.

He didn't offer anything else, and Abel could hear the elevator down the hall, announcing the arrival of a guard. "What are you playing at, my boy?" Abel asked gently. The second Will drew in a sharp breath he knew that the man was ready to make a deal with the devil. "Oh, Will."

Will snorted at him and turned away, standing from his cot with a loud creak. Abel followed his footsteps in his mind to the front of the cell.

"Wish me luck," Will said as the gate down the hall opened and the heavy steps of the guard began to approach.

"You should forget about him," Abel said, sitting up with a grunt. "Your innocence is hanging on by a thread, Kiddo."

"And you really aren't in the position to give me advice," Will shot back.

"Turn around, hands out the hole," the guard said, finally interrupting them.

Abel listened to him leave, solid steps down the hall, and for not quite the first time he wondered what his life would have been like if he'd never met the man with the devil on his back.

"This isn't healthy."

Will was sitting across the table from Alana Bloom, pale in the bright light of what felt less like a place to meet with people from the outside and more like an interrogation room. Alana watched him say the words, and for the life of her, couldn't figure out what was going to come next.

"Holding a grudge against Hannibal," he elaborated to her surprise. "The murder attempt made me realize I don't hate him."

Don't hate him. Alana tried to imagine just how much that turn of phrase could hide. Something wasn't right.

"That's…" she tried, looking over Will's face carefully, "that's really good, Will. I'm glad." He tried to go on and she held her hand up to stop him. "I just want to warn you, as a friend. I know what you and Hannibal had was passionate, but I don't think you're good for each other. He has a way of-"

"I'm not looking for reconciliation, Alana," he interrupted with a gentle smile and the tilt of his head. "I just asked you here to help give me the opportunity to mend a bridge. Before it's too late."

"I can let him know," Alana replied, swallowing hard around something rising up in her throat. The hairs on the back of her neck were threatening to stand at the dark look in Will's eyes.

As soon as Will relented, she knew she should have said no.

Less than an hour later Will was joined in that room next by Jack Crawford. Jack was less affable, and got right to the point, eschewing common courtesy.

“Why am I here?” he asked, looking more drawn than Will had remembered.

“How’s the case?” Will asked, holding his cards close to his chest.

“Will,” Jack warned. “You haven’t cared until now?”

“My priorities haven’t changed,” Will replied. “I can still catch him for you.”

That gave Jack pause, and he leaned in closer to the plastic barrier. Will had the flash of an impulse to head butt him through it, but he pushed it aside. They were on the same team, he reminded himself.

“I can catch him, because I know something you don’t. I know something no one else in the world knows,” Will tempted.

“And that is?” Jack asked, his irritation giving way to hope.

“I’ve got motive,” Will declared. The light in Jack’s eyes was an immediate change and Will felt that old relief of being in the know rush over him.

“What do you want?” Jack asked, barely breathing.

Will smiled and sat back, ready to drop the ultimate bait. “Well, you see, Jack, when I finally get out, I want to consult for the FBI.”

Hannibal Lecter had a peculiar face. He wasn't exactly conventionally handsome when it came to American tastes, but he was cultured. His lips were just a little too pink, a little too prominent. Even now, cast in a scowl, Will couldn't ignore that seeing him again up close had some magic happening he didn't agree to. Breathtaking had always been how Will thought of him, and this time was no different. His hair had been cut a bit shorter, his clothes a few shades darker, more contemporary. Will wondered if he was trying to fit in a bit more, tone down the aristocrat look. Hiding in plain sight, again, the chameleon.

Hannibal stood in front of him, a file folder held in his hands. Will tried not to look too closely at his wrists, where blood red cuffs peaked out from gunmetal gray jacket sleeves. His scent spilled out into the room and Will felt a need rise in him the same way it rose up with the letter. He wanted to get closer. (Under his skin.)

It was his fourth grade crush all over again, with him crying to his Papa that he couldn't help but love someone so pretty, even after she had him eat one of Daddy's cigarettes as a prank. He never wanted to hurt her, no matter what trick she pulled. Hannibal, on the other hand, deserved a few tricks of his own.

"I'm glad you finally agreed to meet with me," Hannibal said, his voice rough, indicating damage from the attempted hanging. *Deserved.* "I had a feeling you would contact me soon."

The smile that overtook Hannibal's face had a calm fondness as he held his hands steepled in front of him on the table. There was a spit guard, a simple hanging plastic divider, and Will found he needed to focus to not test it out.

"You told me to contact you when I needed your help. Alana said she would be my messenger," Will said, meeting Hannibal's eyes and challenging him to find the lie.

"I hope you know I never truly questioned your innocence," Hannibal replied smoothly, opening the folder and leafing through a set of photos. "Neither did your admirer."

Will's stomach sank as he recognized the scene in the photos. The daffodils that were moved from the flowerbed to adorn the dead bailiff like a crown, the half buried body, the body bag.

"Jack wanted me to ask if you think the Ripper had a hand in this," Hannibal explained, pushing the file in his direction on the metal table. "It would be beneficial if you were helping us out while on trial; shows your good side."

Will couldn't help but bite, drawn in by the long lost banter. "My good side is when I'm *putting away killers?* That's your opinion, Dr. Lecter?"

Hannibal raised an eyebrow and rested his hands in his lap. "Jack sees it as the diametric opposite of aligning with this admirer of yours. Do you often worry about how I see you?"

"Yes. But I know how I see myself now." Will managed to sound confident enough, even as he tried not to brush against Hannibal's fingers as he passed the file back over. He breathed deeply and focused on the photos. "And I can always see the Ripper just fine."

It was a dangerous play, to go along with what Hannibal wanted, but it was unavoidable. He had to give him a version of honesty he could live with.

"Do you see the Ripper here?" Hannibal pressed.

"I see a young man, fixated on the Ripper. He admires him in a sort of way, enough to attempt emulation," Will replied. "He may have fixated on the Ripper: his victims, his crimes."

"He focused on you, didn't he?" Hannibal asked, directing the conversation where he wanted with ease.

"A lot of people do," Will shot back with a bit of bite. "I know you read Freddie's stuff. I'm popular."

"And what did you do with this young man's love?" Hannibal asked.

"Squandered it," Will replied coldly. "Like so many others."

There was a silence between them then that had Hannibal's smile widening and Will's eyes flicking back to the man's cuffs.

"So, will you help me?" Will asked at last.

"It would feel good to be your friend again," Hannibal all but gushed.

"Colleague," Will corrected.

"Colleague," Hannibal echoed, in a surprising turn of fate.

He held his hand out for Will to shake, and before the guard could stop them Will was gripping his hand, sliding his pointer finger up his sleeve to feel the spider leg edges of the sutures holding Hannibal's wrist together, and under them, hot and insistent, Hannibal's heartbeat.

(Just a man, he's *just a man!)*

Their eyes met over the shouting and Will couldn't even blink. He held Hannibal's gaze and for a second, just a split second, pressed his fingernail into that fragile spot, catching on the sutures and pulling.

The brief look of pain from Hannibal, the hands pulling him away as he was dragged off, and the scent of the cologne hit some unforeseen note and Will was gasping and half-hard, desperate to see even a drop of blood, he felt ravenous for it, panting.

He looked over the shoulder of the guard pulling him away and caught an unmistakable look of lust in Hannibal's eyes. He didn't know for a moment whether the instinct was to fuck or destroy, but his body shook with it.

"I need you, Doctor Lecter," he cried out, the sentiment closer to the whole truth than he was comfortable.

There came no response but the glint in the other man's eyes, black and deeper than the ocean.

Chapter End Notes

Will: I'm gonna fuck that old man 😩

Everyone: uuuuuuhhh

Will: oh shut up...well...🎭😜😁💦🤪

Straight to Hell

Chapter Summary

Hannibal reacts to his interaction with Will and goes on to kill a man.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

And I can always see the Ripper just fine.

Will's words repeated in Hannibal's mind, pleasure heightening the pain at his wrist, drawing his attention to the sting, pleasure sweet as Summer on that early March afternoon, coursing through him as Will was bodily removed from the room. The guard was reprimanding him for the contact, breathlessly reminding him of the rules, his voice a deep rumble joining the tenor of leg chains and handcuffs and bound keys on belts, *and* the alarm going off somewhere far down the hall, to imprint such a sense of chaos and power on the moment that Hannibal felt he could not breathe. He was *joyous.*

Don't rush this, he thought, overcome with emotion, *like Spring, it will come.*

The joy of shared passion with someone who can truly see you is euphoric. *It could be detected on a brain scan,* he thought. He let his eyes close and imagined the activity in the expected regions of the brain in neon colors, neurons firing so fast that new *major* connections were built right before the eye, new bridges emerging. Growth like a time-lapse of kudzu; everything in his mind saturating itself in *feel good* chemicals, all calling out a single name, *Will Graham.*

It took what felt like forever to get home, what with having to stop at Will's to grab his dusty bed linens and curtains and check the mail. There was something from Will's bank, and he wondered how long it would be before they had a talk about his financial secrets. Living a solitary life and being a monk were two separate things after all, and after finding Will's bank reserves to be quite robust, and the two boats and three cars under his name, Hannibal was starting to wonder if all of Will's class based complaints weren't there to cover up his own feelings of guilt. It wasn't his childhood that made him bitter, it was the wealth he was accumulating, sitting dormant with no one to go to after his death but a baker's dozen or so dogs.

Still, every new view into Will was intoxicating, every layer of Will's presentation began to make more sense; the understated khakis and hunter's jackets were Will's way of hanging onto his childhood social status. He could afford bespoke suits, and bought Hanes brand everything anyways. Hannibal grinned as the realization crystallized.

Out of the prison, Spring in Baltimore was a jubilant affair, the cherry trees breaking out in their finest along Stratford Road and West Franklin. Their scent on the wind joined by the complicated scent of Pyrus calleryana, the Callery Pear, an invasive species that sent whole trees popping up yards off from where they were first planted. He let his body react to what had happened, to the smell of almond, peony, soft powder and ejaculate. He gripped the steering wheel with one hand and pressed a palm against his growing erection, adjusting himself roughly and digging his fingernails into his inner thigh to focus.

It brought a vision of Will back, fingernails catching on his sutures as his pupils dilated and his tongue drew out to wet his bottom lip. *-I want to fucking-*

In the blink of an eye he remembered Will's wild eyes in the bathroom at the Opera, the way he'd stepped forward defiantly, oh, Lord, how Hannibal wanted that again. *-fucking tear you-*

He was struck hard by the next memory, flying down the freeway without seeing a thing. Will had looked unhinged that night at the hotel room, thumb pressing into Hannibal's eye socket as his lips pulled back to reveal his canines. *-fucking tear you apart-*

Before that, Will's body had been telling him the same story. Will, in the hallway; pressing into a fresh wound, Will in the bathroom; sneering at him and calling him names, Will when they met; picking up his business card like it might be covered in dog shit.

Hannibal struggled to get a hand down his pants, overcome by the string of truth tying all those points together. He gripped the base of his cock middle finger nudging up behind his balls. The truth was, Will had a bad attitude and a need to inflict pain that had his morality in a chokehold and his cock in the mouth of any man willing to kill for him. He was complicated and angry, and he wanted to hurt those he deemed to be crooks and liars.

Hannibal gave his cock a rough stroke and fumbled with a handkerchief so he could call someone on speakerphone. The phone rang and he squeezed the base of his cock and tried to get his breathing back under control. The phone rang several more times before there was a click and Alana's voice came through.

"Hannibal," she said, sounding either surprised or guilty.

"You didn't tell me you spoke to Will," he accused lightly, breathing through his nose and watching his own cock for a second as a lone bead of precome ran down over his thumb.

There was a pause, and then Alana replied. "Were *you* going to tell *me?* You're just leaving there, right?"

Hannibal snorted and kept his eyes on the road. It was fair enough.

"He said you were meant to give me a message, Alana," he pressed, so aroused he almost wanted to drive into the next concrete pillar he saw just to feel something besides his desire break him. "What was the message?"

"Are you in the car?" Alana asked, obviously picking up on something. "You sound funny, are you okay?"

“I’m desperate!” he bellowed, overwhelmed momentarily by all the sensations. “Desperate for information on Will,” he explained. *Christ, he was flying too close to the fucking sun.*

“Hannibal.”

An attempt at appeasement, an offer to ignore the question. He rolled his hips and gripped his cock tighter, to the point of pain.

“Tell me,” he said softly, just a slight exhale of air. “Please, Alana. This is not the time to play at discretion. You know my feelings for him. Tell me.”

“He said he wanted to mend the rift between you two,” Alana allowed at last. “He said…”

Hannibal clenched his jaw tight to keep from moaning and gave himself three quick strokes, his prick so heavy and hard it hurt. He thought if he wasn’t able to come he might vomit. His hand shook on the steering wheel.

“He said he doesn’t hate you,” Alana concluded.

Hannibal’s car swerved slightly as he hung up the call, free hand slamming back on the steering wheel as he started to fuck up into his own fist. Oh, Will *wanted* him, wanted to *punish* him, wanted to *climb under his skin!* His legs shook with need as he tightened his fist and imagined Will’s hands around his throat. It was what he needed and he was coming all over the steering wheel and his own lap and chest, grunting like a wild animal at remembering being buried deep inside Will.

He pulled the car up behind his house and parked, letting his eyes close as he slumped in his seat for one final moment of bliss before he had to figure out how to clean himself up. His handkerchief took the brunt of the mess before he stuffed it in his pocket and zipped up his pants. The bottle of hand sanitizer he kept in the visor would have to do.

He proceeded to the door to let Dog out and stripped out of his clothes in the first floor bathroom. He washed his hands and pulled on a robe to gather the laundry from the car. Dog yipped and ran around Hannibal’s legs twice after heading to the maple tree to relieve itself when he emerged.

“I saw Will today,” Hannibal told him cheerily. “He will be home soon, yes he will.”

The pup came along with him, prancing at his heel as he walked into the house. They made their way to the laundry room, the smell of citrus centering his mind as he sorted out the whites from the darks. He went through the rest of the steps and got a large load going, then scooped Dog up under his arm and went to sit in his living room on the sofa facing the window.

“The weather is mild today, Dog,” he said with mock seriousness. “I do believe you’re owed another walk.”

Dog whimpered a bit in excitement and jumped from his lap. The little thing ran out of the room, undoubtedly to get the leash and drag it over, and Hannibal picked up his phone and

texted Alana to apologize for the “dropped call”. In a few hours, he would make his move.

Frederick sat at his home desk, camera on his laptop waiting to record every twitch, every drop of sweat threatening to break from his hairline. For a moment he felt mesmerized by the mirror-like image on the screen, by the absolute *fear* in his own eyes, and couldn’t seem to snap out of it. He thought he heard something near the front of the house, and paused to listen, computer forgotten. He took the end of his tie and flipped it over to dab at his forehead and eyebrows, because even his fucking *eyebrows* were sweating. The sound came again, but it was just the scratching of the maple tree limbs on the window.

“Windy day, windy day. God, I’m petrified,” he said, looking at his own shaking hands. “Get it done, Frederick,” he murmured, glancing down at the annotated copy of his living will. He cleared his throat and spoke to himself again, fingers on the keyboard. “I’m nervous, I’m very *fucking* nervous, and I feel like fate is closing in around me like a vice.”

“Rabbit ready for the cull,” a familiar voice said from behind him.

He jumped out of his skin, but the cloth was pressed over his mouth before he could finish the thought, and he was gone.

Frogs croaked as the sun set and Hannibal stopped what he was doing for a second to listen to them. He tried to soak it all in, all he was doing for Will to be able to once again listen to the night come on with him. He took a deep breath and pulled up a few cc’s of his favorite concoction again, smiling as he prepared to wake his captive.

The second he pushed the reversal into Chilton’s veins he was blinking and stuttering awake, trying to move and understand where he was.

“What the fuck?” he slurred, eyes focusing on Hannibal.

“Profanities already?” Hannibal asked, face frighteningly blank. “We haven’t even started, Frederick.”

That was when the screams came. It took a while for him to yell himself out, and when he did Hannibal pulled a stool up next to where he was bound to the chair in the middle of the clearing.

"Why are we, why are we in the w-woods?" Chilton sputtered, head bowed like a rag doll.

"I'm sure you can figure that out on your own," Hannibal teased blandly. "First, do you know whose woods these are?"

Chilton took in a deep and ragged breath, head still down, and seemed to weigh his options. "Will? Will's property?" he asked, voice weak as well as his posture.

"Good guess," Hannibal allowed, causing Chilton to finally glance up. "You're correct. I have to make good on a promise and I want to know a few things, but after that I will be spilling

your blood on this earth."

Chilton cried out and thrashed again, shaking his head back and forth. "God, my God, no, no Hannibal! Please! Let me go!"

"Did you touch him?" Hannibal asked, not giving an inch.

"What?" Chilton gasped, the scent of his sweat growing acrid.

"Did you, or anyone on your team hurt Will? Did anyone force him into an uncomfortable situation?" Hannibal continued.

Night fell around them and the crickets joined the frogs as the bugs started to really go at Chilton.

" *Jail* is an uncomfortable situation," he spat. "I don't, I mean, I can't promise anything."

It was the most truth he was going to get, and Hannibal knew it. It was good for the man that he wasn't personally involved. That would have been much more painful.

"Why are you doing this to *me?"* Chilton asked.

Hannibal huffed out a sigh and started looking for a vein on the closest bound arm.

"You know, Frederick, that really has been one of your main problems," Hannibal replied in an exhausted tone. "You always want everything to be about you."

More screaming followed, but it didn't last long.

Chapter End Notes

Will: I want to tear you apart

Hannibal, with hearts in his eyes: finally

Goodnight, Hannibal

Chapter Summary

We find out how Hannibal plans to get Will out of prison, and see what he gets for it.

Chapter Notes

Hello readers! We finally finished part two! I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it! Going to take a little break, going to binge watch the show, and then we'll be back with 55 new chapters!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Judge Davies woke with a start. The thunderclap of wood and metal rending below them brought both he and his wife to attention. His first thought was that the old oak out back that had been showing signs of age had finally fallen onto the roof of the garage and taken out his Benz.

"Stay here," he said to his wife, "sounds like the worst of it is over."

His wife nodded, her curls a nest on her head and eyes wide. She looked to his side table as he pulled on his slippers.

"John," she pleaded softly.

"Okay, okay," he replied, reaching into his bedside table where she was looking to grab his gun box. "There's nothing now but the damn horn blaring."

He meant to soothe her with those words, even as his fingers shook where he entered the code. He took a deep breath and opened the box. No time to spare on second guessing, he picked up his handgun, checked it over, and started out of the room and down the stairs.

The whole house was creaking, and as he made his way around the curve of the stairs to the front room he saw why. It wasn't a tree that hit the house, it was a *car coming through the picture window.* What happened next blurred in the Judge's mind each time he went back to it; he saw the rifle, he saw it move, he aimed into the car and shot the driver until his weapon ran out of bullets.

He saw it move.

He *knew* he saw the gun move. But, of course, a body can't move without its head, and the immediate terror and confusion he felt when he realized that it was a very *gray* body in the car and not a 'live aggressor' tore through him and reached some place deep inside and he found himself screaming. He was unable to look away from the place where the head had been hacked off just above the shirt collar.

His wife heard the ruckus and came running down the stairs then, and it was all about getting her out of the house. By the time they were sitting together on the front porch, clutching at each other in the dark and waiting for the police, Judge Davies knew it was connected to the fed's case. The knowledge sat in his stomach like a rock, unyielding and heavy.

"Honey?" his wife whispered, tucking her head under his chin.

He was overwhelmed by the thought that he needed to cherish this moment, this intimacy in the face of horror. His heart felt too big and his throat closed up as he tried to breathe through his nose. He kissed his wife, his childhood sweetheart, the only person who mattered at the end of the day, on the crown of her head and pulled himself together.

"Yes, Love?" he replied, hugging her closer.

"You're going to recuse yourself from the case, okay?"

She was using her teacher's voice, the one that said she'd come to the conclusion before you and was trying to get you there with her. He loved her more for that request than he could reckon with, and though he was fine with expressing emotion, he had never really had a way with words, so he kept it short and sweet. Recognition that she was right, and that he knew how lucky he was to have her by his side, especially in the wake of whatever fresh hell this was. He took a deep breath and gave it all over to her again, completely.

"Yes, Love."

Across town, ten minutes or so later, Jack was pulled from deep slumber by his work cell phone. The screened flashed slowly to lead him to it and he threw his legs over the side of the bed with a gruff sound as he answered.

"Crawford."

The person on the other line sounded tinny from where Bella was laying and listening. Her husband made another gruff sound and stood up to leave the room. Anyone that knew Jack would understand that having him awake and in the house pretty much counted out sleep, she reassured herself, getting out of bed and pulling on her matching robe.

She heard her dentist's voice in her head as she walked down the stairs and towards the coffee maker instead of the bathroom sink. Live and let live, but the man wasn't married to the FBI. She laughed a little bit to herself and shook off the end of sleep as she turned the kitchen lights on. They'd put in a new floor throughout the kitchen and breakfast nook a few years ago, and she honestly couldn't remember how she got through life without it on these bitter spring mornings.

She tried to hear what Jack was saying as she set up the pour over coffee grounds. The tone of his voice and the hour, somewhere around three (she would try to remember to fix the time on the microwave), made her add a second scoop of grounds. She went to the fridge to get the filtered water and froze completely, her hand gripping the water pitcher.

Someone had cleaned their fridge, and maybe that shouldn't have been her first thought, under the circumstances, but there it was. Every surface was gleaming, which really just added to the revulsion of what she was seeing.

"Baby," she called, voice high and tight to her own ears, joined by the ringing she was now hearing.

She slammed the fridge closed, and held her hand out as Jack came into the kitchen. He looked at her quizzically and she was momentarily overcome with emotion as she saw the future splitting like an old oak struck by lightning; before and after he saw what was in the fridge. She waved her hand at him again and he finally understood.

"Give me a second, Jimmy, the wife wants something," he said into the phone, then holding the phone against his chest and whispering to her, "What is it, love?"

"I'm so sorry, baby, but you need to put this on speakerphone," she said with determination, because this killer better hope he's in his mama's prayers if they thought she would let her man be torn down. "Jimmy needs to hear this too."

She was so damned grateful when Jack scrunched up his chin and held the phone out, putting Jimmy on speaker and letting her lead. Every day he was the man she married. She blinked a few times and focused.

"Hello Jimmy, we have a little problem," she said calmly. "Our house is now a crime scene."

Both men started talking frantically and she pushed on. "I'm guessing you found the body?"

"No. What? Yes, we found *a* body, what does this have to-" Jimmy replied clumsily.

"We have the head here on the property. Our house has been broken into," she explained, shocking them both. Jack reached for the fridge and she blocked him. "It's three thirty in the morning March seventh, and the property address is-"

Bella continued giving the basics to them calmly. She stopped and took a deep breath before she divulged the specifics. Before, after. She watched her husband break inside and let go of the vision of him that was the *before.*

"The deceased is Doctor Frederick Chilton."

The sentence hit both men like a sack of bricks, pained wheezes leaving them. Jack's eyes were on the fridge handle and went wide as he imagined the inside of it, bulging like the vein on his neck and forehead. God, she wanted to kiss his forehead.

"They're on their way," Jimmy said, breaking the pained silence. "I know it's cold as hell out, but maybe you can sit in your car until they get there?"

“Thank you, Jimmy,” Jack replied solidly. “We’ll head outside now.”

Bella nodded and watched Jack as he hung up the cellphone.

“I want to *look,* Bella,” Jack insisted, holding the phone out to her as a peace offering, or at least *an* offering.

She took the phone eagerly and tucked it into the pocket of her robe, then crossed her arms in a clear move of resistance. “I know you want to look. I think it’s better you take it in through photos, baby. You’ll never open a fridge the same again, I can promise you that.”

“You mean *you’ll* never open a fridge the same way again,” he said back, gentle but also determined.

“And try as I might, I married my father,” she teased, eyebrow raised, “and this apple didn’t fall far from the tree, Jack. We’re all three the same, so you know I’m not gonna budge on this.”

“He was my friend,” Jack whispered, it dawning on him that she was right, she could see it in the drop of his shoulders.

“Thank you for adding to my case,” she said. “This is hard, come on, let’s sit in the car.”

Jack sighed and nodded, taking her hand and following her out into the impossibly early morning. When they were finally settled in and he had the seat warmers going and the heater on their feet, he turned to her and took her hands in his, blowing hot air into the space between them and kissing her knuckles gently.

“Honey?” she asked, overwhelmed with love and grief.

“Yes, Love?” he whispered into her hands.

“You’re gonna catch this bastard, okay?” she (asked, begged, demanded) *required.*

“Yes, Love,” Jack agreed.

The way it was told to Will, the Ripper had plated Chilton’s head on a bed of kale and used a string of handmade *liver and trachea* sausages. Not exactly Michelin Star, but it was apparently interesting to see the fresh herbs once they had to pull them apart to look for a clue to what was in them. The liver and the trachea were the only things taken from the body that crashed a car through the Judge’s house, of course.

“The sausages were made to look like a noose,” Jimmy whispered to Will on his first day back at the FBI. They’d made it to the scene first and were wasting time until they got the go ahead. “You really never saw the photos?”

“Jack thinks I don’t know he’s restricted my online access,” Will replied. “I can’t get to anything that’s happened before last week.”

“They took you off the Ripper?” Jimmy asked, slapping his hand over his mouth.

“I’m the definition of conflict of interest,” Will replied. He took a deep breath and reassured himself he was coming off ‘normal’.

“You should come to dinner this week,” Jimmy spat. “Really, I mean it. Ralph misses you dearly, and we kinda want to get you drunk.”

Will snorted out a surprised laugh and nodded, chewing on his lips for a moment. It was May, the world full of night-scented blossoms and deafening insect life, two months after Chilton had been killed and one month after Will had been released from BSHCI. This was officially the first time Will had been in the city after dark since his stay. In all truth, he was hesitant to leave his pack at night. The dogs had weathered the storm as well as they could, but Will himself hadn’t. The night was *bad.*

So there he was, avoiding a nightmare and mending working relationships. Beverly was the only person that had visited him since he got out, and seeing her come around the corner made him give his first real smile of the night.

“Howdy, stranger,” she said in greeting, winking at him playfully. “You look good, back in the saddle.”

“Why thank you,” Will replied, nerves finally edging off.

The green tile bathroom where the victim was found was the thing that stuck out to Will the most that night. The Organ Harvester, as Freddie was calling him, was definitely a surgeon, probably a psychopath, and likely a man, but he wasn’t the Ripper.

Brian Zeller was a bit insistent at playing Devil’s advocate, and Will had to close a door in his face to get him to stop talking about the Ripper.

He’d made it a month without speaking of him, and he felt the scales tipping as Zeller argued his case to Jack through the door. Once they were alone in the room Jack raised his eyebrows and Will just shook his head.

“Younger than the Ripper. This one went wrong,” he said, pointing to the blood soaked body in the tub, “because he’s new to this. The Ripper doesn’t *have* bad days.”

“Then how the hell are you going to catch him,” Jack countered, voice low so that the conversation stayed between them.

“All we have to do is wait and watch,” Will reassured him in a hoarse whisper.

Jack seemed to roll that thought around a bit before he spoke next, dead body forgotten completely. “What if he’s on his best behavior?”

“I’m here to insure he isn’t,” Will said with finality.

He couldn't be sure if the search for justice or his own masochism caused him to drive from the scene to Hannibal's house, but there he was at eleven o'clock, parking next to Hannibal's Bentley and turning the car off.

He was still pissed off that Zeller thought this organ harvester was Hannibal. There was no art to the scene, just a few good cuts and a lot of blood. Maybe that was why he was there. To prove to himself the Ripper's sophistication.

He looked at himself in the rear view mirror. His new haircut and the pomade stuff the girl at the counter upsold him actually did him well. He looked closer to the person he had been before all this shit happened, if you ignored the black circles under his eyes. He glanced over to the back door through his car window, lights shining from inside and as welcoming as ever, and pulled the keys out of the ignition.

At the door his hand faltered. He bit the inside of his lip and knocked twice, then held his breath as he saw Hannibal's outline grow. The door handle turned and Will took a single step back.

His first look at Hannibal as a free man felt frenetic. His whole body was pushing him to move, but he stood his ground. "Dr. Lecter," he murmured.

"Will," Hannibal acknowledged with a fond smile, wiping his hands on his apron. "I wasn't expecting your presence, but I could always whip something up if you're hungry."

Will ignored how much he would love to do just that and shook his head slowly. "I went back to work tonight," he said, watching how Hannibal took the news.

"Really?" Hannibal asked, stepping closer to the doorway. "And how was that?"

"Zeller thought it was you," Will replied. "Are you alone?"

"Not exactly," Hannibal said, looking over his shoulder but giving little away. The movement stoked coals in Will's gut. "Would you like it better if I was?"

"You know the answer to that."

"Can I ask you something, Will?" Hannibal said next, cocking his head to the side with a smile. When Will nodded curtly he continued. "Why did you try to arrest me?"

Will rolled his eyes, almost breaking from the spell. "It was my job, it's my job."

"No," Hannibal said softly. Before Will could reply he was asking a new question. "Why did you try to have me killed?"

"Because you deserved it," Will spat, anger running over.

"Better," Hannibal gushed, canines shining in the moonlight. "Now, why did you try to arrest me?"

Will thought about it, thought about a more honest answer, found he *wanted* to give a more honest answer. He licked his lips and tried again. “I wanted to stop you, end you. Be you. It was a tossup.”

“Was. Have you decided?” Hannibal asked, slinking closer still until he was out under the moon with Will.

“I’ve fallen to the silent fourth option,” Will said, arousal running through him. “I’m looking out for myself now, Dr. Lecter.”

“And how are you doing that?” Hannibal asked. His smile was so toothy in the moonlight, so unashamed.

He'll eat you up.

“I’ll show you,” Will promised. “Open your shirt, apron off. Now.”

Hannibal obeyed immediately and Will had to laugh at how easily it was all going. “Won’t your guest mind?” he asked, trying to keep the glorious rush of childlike wonder from his voice.

“No,” Hannibal declared, shoulders falling back, defiant to the end.

“You drive me crazy,” Will admitted.

“May I ask for your forgiveness?” Hannibal murmured, his scent enveloping Will.

“How ‘bout I ask for yours?” Will asked.

“For what, my love?” Hannibal begged.

“This,” Will said, pulling a knife out of his pocket and burying it to the hilt in Hannibal’s side. He watched Hannibal’s eyes go wide as his left hand clasped over his own and the handle. He pulled his hand away once it was wet and warm with blood and took a step back.

Hannibal didn’t wince or cry out, didn’t hiss or spit or argue. His eyes took on the glassy black quality Will remembered so well, and Will gave him one last present as he retreated back into the night.

“Goodnight, *Hannibal.*”

Chapter End Notes

Will: take off some of your clothes so I can stab you better.

Hannibal: 🤑👺👋👨❤️👨🎻😎💍🥂🏳️🌈💋💅✈️🎂👰♀️

Will: 🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪

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